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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

GENERAL JAMES WOLFE: THE HERO IMAGE AND HISTORY

BY

BONNIE MAUREEN MOTYKA

(C)

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

IN

HISTORY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1991

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The undersigned certify that they have read , and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled GENERAL JAMES WOLFE: THE HERO IMAGE AND HISTORY, submitted by BONNIE MAUREEN MOTYKA in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History.

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ABSTRACT

Major-General James Wolfe, commander of the British expedition against Quebec, died of wounds received during the September 13th, 1759 battle for the city of Quebec. After his death, he became one of the most popular heroes of the British people. Celebrating military and naval heroes was a means by which people of eighteenth-century Britain identified with victories and national pride during and after the Seven Years War. The hero image of General Wolfe was developed by writers, orators and artists of the eighteenth century and symbolized the glory and honour of Britain as a military and imperial power among European nations.

Wolfe's hero image enhanced the reality of the man in terms of his physical appearance, character and career. The public perception of Wolfe as a strong, noble and virtuous soldier represented popular patriotism and was part of the tradition of nationalism developing in eighteenth-century Britain. Tracing the evolution of Wolfe's hero image reveals how Britons perceived their nation as well as the influence of myth in history. This study will focus on Wolfe's hero image in the popular press, art and folklore, and in the context of concerns over the 1763 peace treaty and Canada, as well as the government view of the popular hero.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Introduction	1
II.	The Popular Press and the Hero Image	14
III.	The Hero Image in Art and Folklore	39
IV.	Myth Versus Reality	59
V.	Postscript	77
	Bibliography	93

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

On September 13, 1759, Major-General James Wolfe died of wounds received during the battle of Quebec as the enemy fled the field. News of the taking of Quebec reached Britain in mid-October and was enthusiastically celebrated by a population greatly concerned with the defeats and military embarrassments of the early years of war with France. The public was entranced by the tragic story of a young general who gave his life bringing Britain a great victory. Furthermore, the popular euphoria over Wolfe did not diminish when other war news and peace negotiations took the nation's attention. To people of all classes Wolfe came to represent glory and honour for Britain and a symbol of national pride, though this image as a hero never accurately reflected the reality of the man. In the pages that follow a study of the evolution of Wolfe's hero image will be the context to understanding how people of eighteenth century Britain perceived their nation as well as the influence of myth in history.

Popular celebration of heroes in the eighteenth century reveals a growing national consciousness on the part of the general population concerning Britain's place as a military

and imperial power during and after the Seven Years War.[1] Glorifying heroes, those courageous and daring military and naval men whose victories brought prestige to Britain, was a means by which ordinary citizens were able to identify with victories and national honour on a non-political level. Wolfe's death on the battlefield at the threshold of victory proved an incident tailored for hero worship. He became a cult hero for people from walks of life; revered by both the elite and the lower classes as the restorer of national honour.

The hero image of Wolfe created by writers, orators and artists enhanced the reality of the man and the battle. Wolfe became much more than he actually was in both physical and moral characteristics. Reality was replaced by an image of a strong, noble and virtuous soldier, which reflected what the people expected of a hero.[2] The conquest of Quebec became the feat of a great strategist, which ensured the end of French rule in North America. The hero and conquest were also part of the Protestant cause, as a religious victory over a Catholic power. To the British Wolfe became a legendary symbol of their moral as well as military superiority.

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[1]Gerald Jordon and Nicholas Rogers, "Admirals and Heroes: Patriotism and Liberty in Hanoverian England", Journal of British Studies, Vol.28 No.3 (July 1989) 201-202.

[2]Peter Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe, (London: Maurice Temple Smith Ltd., 1978), p. 170.

The existence and influence of popular heroes in the eighteenth century has only lately interested scholars. Discussions of popular heroes in historical literature has traditionally been superficial, such as J.H. Plumb's comment on heroes:

> Fame was accorded to the rashest of heroes - Clive at Arcot, Wolfe at Quebec, Nelson at Aboukir; disgrace and death on the quarter-deck was Byng's lot for allowing caution and wisdom to prevail.[3]

Unfortunately such an approach ignores the popular hero's influence on society as a focus for patriotism and nationalism; that being a subject's devotion for and sense of belonging to a nation.

More recent studies of the hero in popular culture have focused on royalty or naval heroes, such as Vernon and Nelson, rather than military men.[4] Soldiers tended not to be as celebrated or venerated as other public figures because, according to Jordan and Rogers, "generals never entirely

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[3]J.H. Plumb, The First Four Georges, (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1956), p. 14. Robert Clive won fame for his capture and fifty-three day defence of Arcot, against a French-Indian force in 1751. Horatio Nelson won the battle of Aboukir (also known as the battle of the Nile) against Napoleon in 1798. John Byng had been sent to relieve the garrison at Minorca in 1756, but chose to retire rather than fight against what he believed were superior forces. He was court-martialled for neglect of duty and shot in 1757.

[4]Recent studies on heroes in popular culture include Linda Colley, "The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760-1820", Past and Present, No. 102, February 1984; Gerald Jordon and Nicholas Rogers, "Admirals as Heroes: Patriotism and Liberty in Hanoverian England"; and Kathleen Wilson, "Empire, Trade and Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon", Past and Present, No. 121, November 1988.

escape[d] the stigma of standing armies."[5] Since the seventeenth century, the army at home was viewed with suspicion being a potential threat to the liberty of the people as a tool for creating an absolute monarchy.[6] Though generals were not usually as popular or prominent as naval heroes, Wolfe was an exception. His victory at Quebec became a symbol of Britain's supremacy in North America and his death conveniently removed him as a force in the political arena, which heroes such as Vernon, became after their careers in the service. Rather, Wolfe occupied a unique position in the popular culture and patriotic folklore of Britain as an untarnished hero.

Popular culture has always been an elusive aspect of the study of history. It attempts to represent the ways of life, attitudes and values of people who tended not to be part of the literary world, and therefore left few written records.[7] Yet the legacy of popular culture remains part of our heritage through folklore, poems, songs, or art, and has influenced history as much as politics and economics.[8] How heroes were presented and perceived by people of the eighteenth century

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[5]Jordon and Rogers, p. 202.

[6]Kathleen Wilson, "Empire, Trade and Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon", Past and Present, No. 121 (November 1988) 103.

[7]Burke, preface.

[8]Gerald Newman, The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History 1740-1830, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), p. 38.

can reveal aspects of patriotism and nationalism. The reality of the hero in life need not correspond with the reputation and beliefs about him after his death.[9] A man like Wolfe was easily manipulated by writers and artists to fit the hero mould, as few details about his life or the battle were known to the public.

The influence of myth on history, as on popular culture, is disclosed when examining the popular hero. The myth of Wolfe as the brave hero and Christian soldier became part of British national identity, even though the image did not correspond to reality. A myth or legend created and accepted by a people as part of their view of the world is a factor of significance in history. Christie has argued that "a myth may be, indeed often is, a fact, a reality in its own right." [10] What people perceived about their country affected how they viewed their society among other nations. The hero myth of General Wolfe provided in its historical context a definite awareness of national identity among all classes in eighteenth century Britain. The conquering of Quebec came to represent the beginning of the empire and Britain's rise as a military power. Such a feat could only have been accomplished by an extraordinary man. Wolfe's great generalship and high moral standing, praised in contemporary literature, were the virtues

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[9]Ibid., p. 169-171.

[10]Ian Christie, Myth and Reality in Late-Eighteenth-Century British Politics and Other Papers, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), p. 27.

by which the British people wished their nation to be known. Wolfe was the restorer of glory and honour to Britain in the war with France, a role which neither the king nor government occupied in popular culture.

The romantic legend of Wolfe as the hero, created in the eighteenth century, has survived virtually intact to the twentieth century. The fact that the people of eighteenth-century Britain accepted the hero myth is a reflection of how they viewed their society and must be taken into account by historians. The problem for scholars is, as Christie points out, that "the separation of 'myth' and 'reality' is less simple than it appears on the surface."[11] There has been much written about Wolfe and his career and historians have been influenced by the hero image, whether they recognize the myth or not. Contrasting the hero image with related issues, such as the peace negotiations, is one means of separating myth from reality, and thereby revealing the affect of Wolfe's image on eighteenth century popular culture as well as on historical writing.

In the case of Wolfe, tracing the development of the hero image in the popular press shows how myth was accepted and became part of the national identity. By contrasting the publicly accepted view of Wolfe with contemporary views on issues such as the Peace of Paris (1763) and Canada itself, an interesting division of myth and reality is revealed. The

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[11]Ibid., p. 27.

image of the hero and the victory as a source of national pride was distinguished from the disdain over the peace treaty and the problems of gaining a colony of questionable economic value with a foreign, Catholic population. Another area where myth contrasts with reality concerns the lack of official government praise of Wolfe. Though a monument was erected in his honour -- the suggestion of William Pitt, the man who sent Wolfe to Quebec -- the government did not view Wolfe in the same heroic terms as the British people and the popular press.

In order to understand how the hero image was developed by people of the eighteenth century, an examination of the sources of information available to the public is necessary. The main sources employed in this study are from the popular press, particularly the Gentleman's Magazine, London Chronicle and pamphlet literature, but also include poetry, sermons, correspondence, songs and works of art. These sources represent part of the pool of information available to the public from which they would have formed their views of Wolfe. Though more information may be available through other sources, the study has been limited to the those listed above in order to permit an adequate synthesis of the material at hand.

The hero image of General Wolfe, a product of writers, orators and artists of the eighteenth century, was the image the public expected of a great general. By mid-century a greater awareness by the general population of the nation's

status among other countries was the result of rapid growth in the publishing industry and improved communications, which made news available across the country within a few days. There was an enormous rise in the number of publications being produced after 1760, allowing the public to gain information from a wide variety of printed materials.[12] An account of the battle of Quebec and death of Wolfe became known to the nation within a day after the news reached England. William Pitt received the news around ten o'clock on the evening of Tuesday, October 16th; by Wednesday morning it was generally known in London. A special edition of the Gazette was published for the occasion. The news was spread across the country by messengers and was celebrated with ringing bells and blazing bonfires.[13] There were a number of local, unofficial celebrations of the victory which included people of all classes. An account of the celebrations in Norfolk, reported in the London Chronicle, is representative of the type of festivities which occurred in honour of the victory:

> ... the greatest rejoicings have been made there, on the glorious and signal victory gained at Quebec ... there was an ox roasted whole, and a sheep, and a pig barbicu'd, in the market place at Fakenham, where many country gentlemen, clergy, tradesmen and freeholders, of the town and neighbourhood, assembled to partake of them; ... The Town was illuminated at night; with bells ringing

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[12]Ibid., p. 314.

[13]Duncan Grinnell-Milne, Mad, Is He? The Character and Achievement of James Wolfe, (London: the Bodley Head Ltd., 1963), p. 278.

> successfully the whole week; guns firing, and the militia volunteers fired in platoons; in short, there has been in all the villages round there, bonfires, illuminations, and every other testimony of joy on so glorious an occasion.[14]

The extent to which the press was influential in eighteenth-century society continues to be debated by historians. However it has been generally conceded, as Lawson points out, "that readership far outstripped circulation, and that there was broad access to the printed word across the social classes whether it be first, second, or third hand."[15] The diffusion of information through a larger reading public was a key factor in the development of national ideals and attitudes by people of the time. The popular press is important in the study of the hero myth because it reflects contemporary opinions of both the editors and the public. In the eighteenth century, successful publications, according to Carlson, "responded to the demands ... [of] a growing consciousness of national importance."[16] Indeed most publishers found it necessary to print material which pleased

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[14]London Chronicle, October 20-23, 1759, p. 390. The same issue also records an account of celebrations in London, see p. 392. See also Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 29, October 1759, p. 495.

[15]Philip Lawson, "Arts and Empire Equally Extended: Tradition, Prejudice and Assumption in Eighteenth Century Press Coverage of Empire", Journal of History and Politics, Karl Schweizer and Jeremy Black, eds., Vol VII, 1989, p. 119.

[16]C. Lennart Carlson, The First Magazine: A History of the Gentleman's Magazine, (Providence, R.I., Brown University, 1938), p. 239.

their readers, reflecting the influence of contemporary opinions on issues as well as tastes. The Gentleman's Magazine was a much read publication and also an excellent record of eighteenth century tastes and interests.[17] The printed word was a key element in the development Wolfe's hero image; through words the myth of the hero was conveyed to a public, which at the very least, expected qualities of greatness and virtue in its heroes.

To understand how the public perception of Wolfe developed after his death, some information on Wolfe and his military career is necessary as a basis for comparison. Wolfe's appearance and ill-health were two aspects which were either altered or ignored in the development of the hero image. Wolfe was not a strong, soldierly looking man. He was over six feet, thin, with narrow sloping shoulders. His face was angular, with a dull complexion, long nose and double-chin.[18] He was known for his charm and courtesy, though not considered handsome. Wolfe's chronic ill-health plagued him; in all likelihood he suffered from tuberculosis.[19] Due to illness, Wolfe was forced to leave active service several

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[17]Ibid., pp. vii-viii.

[18]John Webster, Wolfe and the Artists: A Study of his Portraiture, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1930), p. 73.

[19]John Webster, Wolfiana: A Potpourri of Facts and Fantasies, Culled from Literature Relating to the Life of James Wolfe, (Privately Printed, 1927), p. 9.

times during his career and at Quebec he nearly relinquished his command when he became seriously ill.

Despite his ill-health, Wolfe had an active military career. He entered the army in November 1741, at the age of fourteen, as a 2nd Lieutenant in his father's regiment. Being from a military family, it was not unusual for Wolfe to have begun his army career at such a young age. By 1745 he had been promoted to major and served in Flanders and at Culloden under the Duke of Cumberland. Wolfe was quarter-master of the expedition against Rochefort in 1757; his actions gained him the good opinion of some of his superior officers. In 1758 Wolfe proved himself an able regimental commander at Louisbourg and was made a colonel. His actions and abilities were noted by William Pitt, Secretary of State, and in 1759 Pitt offered Wolfe the command of the expedition against Quebec.

He sailed in the spring of 1759 for North America, with an army of some 8500 men and a fleet of forty-nine ships. For the duration of the expedition he was given the rank of Major-General. The force reached Quebec city by mid-June. Wolfe's first real attack on the French army was at Montmorency in July, but it was a failure. Over the summer Wolfe continued to plan strategies for capturing the fortress city. Finally on September 13, with the campaigning season nearly finished, Wolfe had his army scale the cliffs to the Plains of Abraham

in order to force the French to come out of their entrenchments and fight on open ground.[20]

Historians have continued to debate Wolfe's ability as a strategist and commander, and his plan of attack on Quebec, which could have brought disaster as easily as victory.[21] The hero myth of Wolfe has had influence on how historians have written about him. Some have dealt with his life and career in a romantic manner which foreshadows his victory at Quebec, while others have attempted to break the traditional view entirely.

The facts of Wolfe's career are not the focus of this discussion, but rather how the public perceived him after his death. The transformation of Wolfe into a popular hero is part of the traditions of nationalism which were developing in the eighteenth century.[22] Wolfe's hero image reveals the influence of myth on the people who created it as well on historians. To understand the importance of the hero in popular culture, this discussion will be developed in three areas: the evolution of Wolfe's hero image, the hero image in

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[20]For a detailed discussion of Wolfe's life and career, see Dictionary of National Biography, Vol XXI, Sidney Lee, ed., (London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1909), pp. 769-775.

[21]See W.J. Eccles, "The Battle of Quebec: A Reappraisal", in Essays on New France, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987). The essay discusses the military mistakes of Wolfe and Montcalm's strategies at Quebec.

[22]Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger, eds., Invention of Tradition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 7.

folklore and art, with respect to the commercialization of the hero, and finally, comparing the hero image in the context of the concerns over the peace treaty and Canada and the government view of the popular hero.

CHAPTER II - The Popular Press and the Hero Image

Soon after the news of the victory at Quebec reached Britain accounts began to be published about Wolfe. In the months following, the popular press created an image of a courageous, noble and daring hero which their readers accepted as fact. The reality of Wolfe's life and character were embellished in order to underscore an already heroic story. A very complex hero image was developed, encompassing Wolfe's career and personality. Few details had been known about his life and the only information available to the public was derived from military dispatches originating in Quebec. Thus Wolfe's character was easily enhanced for a public audience which wanted to know all about the victorious general. Wolfe was no longer a professional soldier who successfully completed his commissioned expedition, but became the genius commander who restored Britain's military honour; embodying the virtues and Christian characteristics respected by the nation. Once established, Wolfe's image was defended in the public forum. Though the hero image was accepted by the general public, comparing some private opinions on Wolfe with the accepted public image reveals the influence of the myth in mid-eighteenth century popular culture. Wolfe was more than

a symbol of national honour, he was also an example for all Britons of the necessity of duty and sacrifice for the country.

Dispatches and information on the seige of Quebec printed in the popular press aroused great interest among the reading public. After the battle, interest in Wolfe and Quebec rose but the scope of material published also changed from military information to hero worship. Wolfe's victory and death made him a popular hero; a status he had not held before Quebec. He was not a well-known public figure until he was put in command of the Quebec expedition. Wolfe had a good reputation in military and government circles as an able regimental officer, but he was not a hero in the public eye. He was not the object of heroic praise during his lifetime for his roles at Rochefort in 1757 and Louisbourg in 1758. After his death, Wolfe's previous military accomplishments were greatly enhanced in order to foreshadow his final triumph.

The contemporary view of Wolfe and the victory of Quebec is revealed through tributes to him in the popular press and by orators. In the pages that follow the language of those who wrote about Wolfe has been employed as much as possible, in order to gain an understanding of the contemporary view of the hero. Wolfe's hero image began with the first publications after the battle, in which he was elevated above ordinary men and endowed with great and noble characteristics. In the pamphlet, A Monody on the Death of General Wolfe,

published in November 1759, the author gave a detailed description of Wolfe's heroic character in relation to the nation's prestige and reputation:

> Major-General Wolfe scarce needs an higher encomium than public opinion. He was one of those few generals that never gave his country cause of complaint - but by his death. He was one of those intrepid heroes that fought to brave every danger where the service of his country called him. And he was one of those deliberate officers that well-weighed the nature of his enterprise, his enemy's position and numbers, and regulated every manoveure by that penetration he so happily acquir'd from nature. His country has cause to mourn the loss of such a friend and the army such a chief.[1]

In the public eye Wolfe became the epitome of a subject's duty to the country. His military skill and knowledge were praised as though he were a seasoned commander, though his only independent command was Quebec. Wolfe was considered a general worthy of high praise at a time when military success lacked the glamour and romance of naval battles. His daring plan brought a victory which was as exciting and glorious as Vernon's capture of Porta Bello with only six ships in 1739.[2]

During the campaign, accounts had appeared in the popular press concerning the fortifications at Quebec, the nature of

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[1]A Monody on the Death of General Wolfe, London, 1759, p. 18. Praise of the nation in relation to Wolfe's victory was the theme of a number of poems and essays. See also "To the Memory of General Wolfe", Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 29, November 1759, p. 539, and "An Inscription Proposed for General Wolfe's Monument", Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 42, October 1772, p. 431.

[2]Wilson, "Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon", pp. 80-81.

the country and the numerical superiority of the French forces. A victory against such odds enhanced Wolfe's military reputation. The popular press praised Wolfe's abilities as if victory had been a forgone conclusion, but did not acknowledge the risks of his plan. A sermon preached by Andrew Eliot in October 1759, praised Wolfe as the only commander capable of taking Quebec:

> [I]t [the victory] is great, as it was attended with difficulties which would have been insurmountable to any, but a General of such heroic fortitude and consummate skill.[3]

The image of an all-conquering hero began to crystallize concerning Wolfe's abilities as a general and was extended to the man himself. Thereby Wolfe's heroic character was credited as the cause for success of what was being extolled as the greatest victory of the war:

> In the death of the gallant general, whose abilities formed, whose courage attempted, and whose conduct happily effected the glorious enterprize in which he fell, leaving to future times an heroic example of military skill, discipline, and fortitude.[4]

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[3]Andrew Eliot, A Sermon Preached October 25, 1759, Being a Day of Public Thanksgiving Appointed by Authority, for the Success of the British Arms this Year; Especially in the Reduction of Quebec, Boston, 1759, p. 35. See also A Letter to the People on the Necessity of Putting an Immediate End to the War; and the Means of Obtaining an Advantageous Peace, London, 1760, pp. 6-7.

[4]Address of the City of London on the occasion of the victory at Quebec, reprinted in the Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 29, October 1759, p. 495.

> Such a general was the brave Wolfe, as appears from his actions; for though he could bestow Counsel and teach others, yet he was not above being advised himself; And it may be truly said, that he was an Ornament to the Army, and the Parent of Soldiery.[5]

The overall presentation of Wolfe was as a man of military genius, though humble, who viewed duty to his country as a sacred service. He was also portrayed as being unconnected with political faction and therefore untainted by patronage and corruption. According to the hero myth, Wolfe was appointed commander of Quebec because of his military skill, not through patronage or position. In fact Pitt had appointed him over others who were more experienced as commanders which was a political risk for the Secretary of State and for Wolfe, a test if he was capable of co-ordinating a seige and battle independently. However, within the scope of the hero image, Wolfe's rise through the ranks became legendary, a result of his virtue and skill. The heroic view of Wolfe's career was that "[a]t a time of life when many have but the command of a Company, he had raised himself by his merit almost to the top of his Profession."[6] By the mid-eighteenth century there was great concern over the entrenched system of buying offices and commissions, which excluded those without wealth or connections from lucrative and influential

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[5]Mr. Grove of Richmond, A Letter to the Right Honourable Patriot Upon the Glorious Success at Quebec, London, 1759, p. 3. See also "Epitaph on General Wolfe", Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 43, January 1773, p. 39.

[6]Ibid., p. 22. See also Annual Register, 1759, p. 41.

positions. As a popular hero who had supposedly gained his rank through merit rather than influence, Wolfe was perceived as untainted by the corruption which the public deplored.[7] In fact, a professional soldier having an independent command at the age of thirty-two was not unusual. His fellow commanders at Quebec were contemporaries; the six year span between Wolfe and James Murray was the largest age difference among the senior officers.[8] Wolfe had more practical battle experience than some other British officers, but his achievement of independent command may be viewed more as Pitt's political gamble of an untried commander rather than an extraordinary achievement for a professional soldier.

After his death, Wolfe's military career previous to Quebec became part of the hero image, foreshadowing his final victory. Comparing public praise of Wolfe's role at the seige of Louisbourg in 1758, before and after his death, clarifies the change in perception. Wolfe had been praised for his bravery and skill as a brigade commander after Louisbourg, but not in the heroic fashion as after his death. An account of

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[7]The myth of Wolfe's rise through the ranks has been part of the historical debate of the hero. See A. G. Bradley, Wolfe, (London: MacMillan and Co., 1904), p. 53. Bradley claims Wolfe achieved his rank because of his abilities, though admits Wolfe had the assistance of the Duke of Cumberland. See also E.R. Adair, "The Military Reputation of Major-General James Wolfe", Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers (1936) 12. Adair disagrees entirely with the hero image on Wolfe's career, stating that the general had influence through relatives and friends.

[8]C.P. Stacey, Quebec 1759: the Seige and the Battle, (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1959), p. 6.

the seige appeared in the May 1758 issue of the Gentleman's Magazine in which Wolfe was praised for his courageous conduct and as an important member of the team which successfully took the fortress from the French.[9] The whole army at Louisbourg was credited with the victory, not just one man. However after Wolfe's death his role in the campaign was re-interpreted to reveal his great military ability; he became known as the hero of Louisbourg. In the pamphlet, The Life of General James Wolfe, his conduct at Louisbourg was praised in the best heroic fashion reserved for the most renowned conquerors:

> [I]t is incredible what extra ordinary feats he performed in this seige [Louisbourg]; and all of them the genuine affects of his distinguished Abilities, his Conduct and Intrepidity; which rendered him a Terror to the Enemy, and not without just Reason the Safeguard and Ornament of his Country ... the Restorer of the Reputation of the British Arms; as the Conqueror of Cape Breton with the noble Amherst.[10]

After Wolfe's death his entire career was praised as heroic, even though the process subordinated the reputations of his former commanders, like Amherst. Since Wolfe had been the hero of Quebec, it followed that he had been an unsung hero before. The popular press portrayed Wolfe as a man destined

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[9]Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 28, May 1758, pp. 384-388.

[10]John Pringle, The Life of General James Wolfe, The Conqueror of Canada; of the Elogium of that Renowned Hero, 1760, p. 19. See also Isreal Mauduit, An Apology for the Life and Actions of General Wolfe, London, 1765, pp. 3-4.

to bring glory and honour to Britain. The common theme of Wolfe's career was that of a hero waiting to rescue British fortunes in desperate times.

The man described in the popular press was beyond human failings save death, and therefore destined to be a hero. His death at the moment of victory enshrined him as the restorer of Britain's honour as a military power in a war which had seen many defeats and embarrassments for the country. Yet the September 13th battle had been a gamble; a daring plan which had succeeded by luck as much as by military skill. If Wolfe had failed, he would have undoubtedly been criticized like the commanders of the botched Rochefort expedition. The last dispatch Wolfe sent to Pitt which arrived October 13th, advised the possibility of a disappointing end to the campaign. Wolfe wrote of the obstacles faced at Quebec and the lack of progress in taking the city. In his closing passage he expressed hesitancy in whether or not to proceed with a battle, but also the necessity of success against France for the sake of the country's prestige at home and abroad:

> In this situation, there is such a choice of difficulties, that I own myself at a loss how to determine. The affairs of Great Britain, I know, require the most vigorous measures; but then the courage of a handful of brave men, should be exerted only, where there is some hope of a favourable event. However, you may be assured, Sir, that the small part of the campaign which remains shall be employed (as far as I am able) for

> the honour of his majesty and the interest of the nation.[11]

The defeatist forebodings of the dispatch were overshadowed three days later when news of the victory reached Britain. After the fall of Quebec, Wolfe's last dispatch was viewed by contemporaries as a prediction of victory and its content re-interpreted in order to praise the hero. Wolfe's acknowledgement of the importance of his duty in the dispatch allowed writers and orators to link the victory with the belief that Britain was destined to become a great power. In a sermon by Andrew Eliot, the dispatch was discussed in the most positive light:

> Our last advices were, that the General had made such a change in the situation of our army, as was like to bring on something decisive.[12]

The account of the battle which appeared in the Annual Register ignored the dispatch's content entirely in favour of praising Wolfe's heroic character:

> He dispatched an express with an account of his proceedings to England, written indeed in the stile of despondency, but with such perspicuity, clearness, and elegance, as would have ranked him

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[11]Annual Register, 1759, p. 246. The dispatch was written September 2, 1759, from Wolfe's headquarters at Montmorency on the St. Lawrence.

[12]Eliot, p. 35. See also the editorial prologue to Wolfe's last dispatch, Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 29, October 1759, p. 466.

> among our best writers, if his military exploits had not placed him among our greatest commanders.[13]

After his death, Wolfe's reputation changed from being an able regimental officer, having proven himself in battle, to a genius of war, who knew his craft without training.

Such mythologies developed through the practice of enhancing Wolfe's military reputation with comparisons to great heroes of the past. In A Letter to the Right Honourable Patriot, the greatest of ancient heroes paled in comparison to Wolfe and through such praise associated Britain's status as a military and imperial power equal to any of the ancient world:

> How glorious, how immortal is the Man, who thus parts with his life in his Country's Cause! Carthage may boast of her Hannibal, and Rome may decree triumphs for her Scipio, but true Courage never appeared more glorious than in the death of the British Wolfe.[14]

He was ranked by pamphleteer John Pringle as equal with one of the most notable generals; "fulfilling, in his whole Manner, the character of Caesar."[15] While Wolfe was compared with great heroes of the classical past, the same allusions were applied to Britain through comparisons to the greatest ancient empires. The successes of the Seven Years War brought about

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[13]Annual Register, p. 41.

[14]Grove, p. 25. The quotation originally appeared in the Monitor, October 27, 1759. See also "Epitaph for General Wolfe", Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 43, January 1773, p. 94.

[15]Pringle, p. 23. See also Webster, Wolfiana, p. 28.

greater public awareness of Britain's overseas possessions, which became part of its emerging national identity as a new imperial power. Wolfe was also greatly praised in poetry, with many allusions to legendary heroes and seiges, which followed the neo-classical style in vogue in the mid-eighteenth century. A poem from the December 1759 issue of the Gentleman's Magazine illustrates the poetic fashion of hero worship:

> Were there a bard like Homer to rehearse
> his glorious deeds (they ask no meaner verse)
> His own Achilles rivall'd he might tell
> Whilst at Quebec a second Ilium fell.[16]

The comparison of Quebec with Troy reflects the perception that Wolfe's victory ranked Britain among the great conquering nations. Wolfe was no longer a commander who by skill and luck won a battle, but a legendary hero as brave and wise as any general of the classical past. Comparing Wolfe with other heroes not only served to praise him, but also signified Britain's position as a primary military power. The hero image was one feature of popular patriotism; Wolfe's glory was Britain's fame. Celebration of the popular hero defeating the menace of France was a positive way of proclaiming Britain's prominence among other European nations involved with imperial expansion.

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[16]Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 29, December 1759, p. 585.

The legend forming around Wolfe's military career was complemented by the heroic portrayal of his character. Since little was known about the man himself, all aspects of Wolfe's character were easily moulded into the hero image. According to contemporaries, Wolfe possessed qualities of courage, wisdom, selflessness and integrity with no human failings. He represented the epitome of the British character. In the pamphlet, The Life of General James Wolfe, he was presented as a man of intellectual and religious virtue, whose sole purpose in life was his duty to his country:

> All the actions of Wolfe expressed this Portrait of the Christian soldier. Praise may flatter others with the thoughts of Self-Sufficiency ... but in him its effects were only predominant to the out-doing of himself in still greater and more spirited Acts. ...Without Ambition, Avarice, or any other vice, his talents were employed in the defense of the Independence of his Country.[17]

The 1759 Annual Register presented a characterization of Wolfe which endowed him with qualities which destined him for greatness:

> General Wolfe seemed by nature formed for military greatness; ... his constitutional courage was not only uniform, and daring, and perhaps to an extreme, but he possessed that higher species of it, ... that strength, steadiness, and activity of mind, which no difficulties could obstruct or dangers deter. ... [M]anly and unreserved, yet gentle, kind, and conciliating in his manners. ...

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[17]Pringle., pp. 12, 31. See also "Impromptu, on Reading an Epitaph Offered to the Society of Almack's", Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 42, October 1772, p. 488, which relates Wolfe's virtues as a warrior and a man.

> He enjoyed a large share of the friendship, and almost universal good-will of mankind; and, to crown all, sincerity and candour, a true sense of honour, justice, and public liberty, seemed the inherent principles of his nature and the uniform of his conduct.[18]

Overall the hero image created an ideal of perfection of a soldier and man. Wolfe was portrayed as a commanding figure, a leader who was respected, though kind and modest. Ironically most writers only knew of Wolfe by his reputation after Quebec; thus, they arbitrarily endowed him with the qualities and virtues the public expected of a hero.

The idea of Wolfe having the respect and friendship of all in his command was a common theme of the hero image. However, in studying documents and correspondence of the Quebec expedition, Stacey has revealed the strained relations between Wolfe and his subordinate commanders. He was popular among the common soldiers, however his relationship with the senior officers was strained. As military records show, exchanges between Wolfe and his fellow generals were few and stiffly polite, particularly with George Townshend.[19] As well, Wolfe would not have gained his rank without help of men of influence, particularly the Duke of Cumberland, even though he was presented as being above such vices. However, such human failings were not part of the hero image and could not

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[18]Annual Register, pp. 281-282.

[19]Stacey, Quebec 1759 ..., pp. 84-87. See also Grinnell-Milne, pp. 72-76.

be part of the myth created after the fall of Quebec because that was not what the public would have wanted to hear about the heroic general.

Another aspect of Wolfe's hero image concerned his religious and moral characteristics, which reflected on the nation's superiority, as well as the hero's. According to pamphleteer John Pringle, Wolfe's moral sensibilities which destined him for greatness, could be attributed to him while still a youth:

> [I]nspired him with such a deep sense of Religion, ... that imparted Spirit and Motion; nay, may I say, covered with the Shield of Intrepidity, and fitted the Wings of Impetuosity to, the Courage which afterwards appeared in his military character.[20]

The religious aspect of the hero was a very important part of Wolfe's image. His Christian virtue reflected the worthiness of Britain as God's favoured nation. A sermon by Samuel Langdon preached in November 1759 as part of the official day of thanksgiving for the victory, reminded parishioners that the hero and victory were the work of God.

> While we give deserved honours to the worthy Commanders of our armies and fleets, we must remember the victory is the Lord's ... [those] which God has highly honoured; they have been his officers to execute his purposes of goodness

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[20]Pringle, p. 11.

> towards us, by chastening and subduing a proud, perfidious, and restless enemy.[21]

Wolfe's victory not only brought military honour, but also was a significant religious triumph of a Protestant nation over a Catholic power. The belief that the conquest of Quebec proved God favoured the British is evident in Charles Bulkley's October 1759 sermon, which was typical of many preached after the fall of Quebec under direction from the Crown:

> [I]t [the victory] is of the same complexion of other events, that have happily proceeded it, in the course of the present war, and it is to be looked upon as part of a plan, that has been wisely formed upon a just and generous consciousness of our native strength and dignite, as a people. ... God in his providence is ever willing to help that people, by whom a just sense of the dutie are inclined to exert themselves for their common saftie and defense.[22]

The hero image was directly connected with the Protestant cause. Wolfe's victory was part of a greater struggle against the evils of Catholicism, which included the fear of absolutism and the Stuart cause. With Canada freed from

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[21]Samuel Langdon, Joy and Gratitude to God for the Long Life of a Good King and the Conquest of Quebec, Preached November 10, 1759, Portsmouth, 1760, p. 40. See also Richard Winter, A Sermon Preached at New-Court, Carney Street: on Thursday November 29, 1759, Being a Day Appointed by His Majesty for a General Thanksgiving ..., London, 1759, p. 33.

[22]Charles Bulkley, The Signs of the Times, Illustrated and Improved: in a Sermon Preached at the Evening Lecture in the Old-Jewry. Sunday October 21, 1759 On the Occasion of the Surrender of Quebec, London, 1759, pp. 14-15.

French control, the Protestant American colonies could prosper without fear, which would in turn be of benefit to the whole empire. The British believed that their own enlightened institutions would supplant the corrupt influence of France in North America and, as Lawson points out, that " the inhabitants of Quebec would eventually see the superiority of the English political, legal and religious tradition, [and] abandon ... their culture for a higher form of life."[23] Thus the Christian virtues attributed to Wolfe symbolized Britain's moral superiority and the worthiness of the Protestant cause.

In such a manner, then, was Wolfe portrayed as a hero of great military ability and above corruption. According to the popular press, he was proclaimed by God to bring glory and honour to Britain and the colonies. Wolfe was depicted in a manner which glorified Britain, but it did not represent reality. His ill-health, relations with subordinate commanders and the risks of his final plan were not associated with the hero image. It was the restored honour of the nation reflected in the Conquest which interested the people. Through celebrating the hero, people could express pride in their nation; Wolfe's victory was proof of Britain's pre-eminence among other countries competing for the spoils of overseas expansion. The language used to characterize Wolfe confirmed the British belief in their nation's superiority

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[23]Philip Lawson, "The Irishman's Prize: Views of Canada from the British Press, 1760-1774", Historical Journal, Vol. 28 No.3 (1985) 587.

because of their liberties and constitution. The language of patriotism, according to Hugh Cunningham, grew out of such heroic inventions as Wolfe and confirmed the rights of British subjects in areas such as free speech and religion, as well as expounding the British sense of worthiness in their victories over autocratic, Catholic France.[24] The hero image of Wolfe was not just anti-French or anti-Catholic sentiment, but became part of a growing sense of nationalism. In Wolfe's hero image, Britons saw the personification of their nation - strong, respected and favoured by God.

Wolfe's image was predominantly the product of the popular press, which fulfilled public expectations of a hero. When the popular image is contrasted with those who did not accept Wolfe's pristine public reputation, it reveals the persuasiveness of the hero myth in eighteenth-century society. Opinions which dissented from the accepted hero image are not found in the popular press, only in private correspondence. The private and public opinions of Horace Walpole on Wolfe reveal the influence of the audience on what was written for the public and the unwillingness of authors to rebut accepted public views. In a letter of February 9, 1759, Walpole wrote that Wolfe:

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[24]Hugh Cunningham, "The Language of Patriotism 1750-1914", History Workshop Journal, Issue 12 (Autumn 1981) 9-10. See also Kathleen Wilson, "Empire of Virtue: The Imperial Project and Hanoverian Culture c.1720-1785", in A Nation State in War and Peace, Britain 1688-1788, forthcoming, 1990, pp. 27-29.

> was no friend of Mr. Conway last year, for whom I consequently have no affection, had great merit, spirit, and alacrity, and shone extremely at Louisbourg. I am not such a Juno, but I will forgive him after eleven more labours.[25]

General Henry Seymour Conway, Walpole's friend and cousin, had been one of the commanders blamed for the failure at Rochefort. Walpole's criticism of Wolfe stemmed from the fact that Wolfe had testified against Conway at an inquiry on the conduct of the expedition's officers. Though Walpole acknowledged Wolfe's abilities as a soldier, he did not like him, and did not perceive any of the qualities of nobility and virtue found in the public image.

While the public honoured Wolfe as a hero, Walpole's private opinion on the victory was very stoic. He saw no need to grieve over the death of Wolfe:

> It was a very singular affair, generals on both sides slain, and on both sides the second in command wounded - in short, very near what battles should be, in which only the principals ought to suffer.[26]

Walpole's view of the victory may be called prescriptive, but it was not without justification in a country that had greatly suffered in a war which before the victory at Quebec had been very unsuccessful for Britain.

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[25]Horace Walpole's Correspondence, Vol. V, eds. Lewis, Smith and Lam, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 267.

[26]Horace Walpole's Correspondence, Vol. V, p. 338.

However the popular hero image remained the prevalent view among Walpole's published works. His private thoughts on Wolfe's death were not part of his public writings, which reveals how writers cowered in the face of strong popular yopinion in the eighteenth century. A very different portrayal of Wolfe and the battle is found in Walpole's Memoirs of the Last Ten Years of the Reign of George II:

> The incidents of dramatic fiction could not be conducted with more address to lead an audience from despondency to sudden exultation ... They dispaired, they triumphed, and they wept, for Wolfe had fallen in the hour of victory. Joy, curiosity, astonishment, were painted on every countenance; the more they enquired the higher their admiration rose. Not an incident was but heroic and affecting.[27]

Walpole also praised Wolfe's importance to Britain's military prestige in his Memoirs of the Reign of King George the Third: "She [Britain] did not see one famous native general arise out of that war, except Wolfe, who died in the cradle of his celebrity."[28] For a public audience Walpole glorified Wolfe as a hero who would have gone on to accomplish greater feats had he lived. The image presented to the public was what they expected of a hero, private opinions notwithstanding.

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[27]Horace Walpole, Memoirs of the Last Ten Years of the Reign of George II, Vol. II, (London: John Murray, 1822), p. 384.

[28]Horace Walpole, Memoirs of the Reign of King George the Third, Vol. I, (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970),(first published 1894), p. 193. See also Tobias Smollett, History of England, Vol. II, (Edinburgh, 1790), p. 71.

Murray and Townshend, two of the subordinate commanders at Quebec also held personal views on Wolfe which did not coincide with popular opinion. Both neither liked nor respected Wolfe as a commander. In later years Murray proposed to write a history of the campaign which would have derided Wolfe's abilities and plan. Townshend wrote to Murray in 1774, cautioning against the idea because "the Public admire Mr. Wolfe, for many eminent qualities, and revere his memory."[29] There is no record that Murray's narrative was ever written. Had it been, such a history would have undoubtedly met with public outrage for demeaning a hero who had come to represent national prestige and honour.

The image of Wolfe as the great commander became reality for the public; a reality which was defended in the press. To most, the hero image was above reproach or criticism. A 1765 pamphlet, An Apology for the Life and Actions of General Wolfe was written as a rebuttal to a work which, according to Israel Mauduit, had diminished Wolfe's role in the victory at Quebec. The offending article had appeared in the August 1764 edition of the Gentleman's Magazine and concerned the dismissal of General Conway from his military and civil posts.[30] Mauduit

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[29]Stacey, Quebec 1759 ..., p. 175.

[30]Horace Walpole, "Counter Address on General Conway's Dismission", Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 33, August 1764, pp. 363ff. The article was one of a series which debated the controversy surrounding Conway's dismissal. He lost his commission and office in the royal household for voting with the opposition over the government's stand on John Wilkes' election in Middlesex and the use of general warrants in 1764.

was not concerned with the Conway controversy, but rather with defending Wolfe's memory and honour. He quoted the offending passage:

> General Wolfe achieved his glorious career in one important action, forever memorable and reflecting consummate honour on his country, on himself, and on the great man, whose council he executed.[31]

The pamphleteer took exception to the notion Wolfe was anything less than the sole person responsible for the plan of attack on Quebec. He also perceived a slight to the accepted view of Wolfe's previous military accomplishments:

> [D]oes our author remember no other action but his last? or shall the nation forget all the honours acquired in the two previous years of his life? ... The landing in Cape Breton, for the reduction of Louisburgh, was an action, which was not only great in itself; but was the leading conquest, which opened the way for all the rest.[32]

Mauduit refuted the notion that Wolfe was not responsible for the strategy employed at Quebec but merely a soldier taking orders from a political leader. He acknowledged that Pitt chose Wolfe, but the plan of attack was Wolfe's alone:

> Why the reader is led to consider General Wolfe as the hand of execution only, and not as the head also of this great achievement is not easy to

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See Philip Lawson, George Grenville: A Political Life, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 176-178.

[31]Israel Mauduit, An Apology for the Life and Actions of General Wolfe, London, 1765, p. 8.

[32]Ibid., pp. 3-4.

> conceive ... the ascribing of this attempt to the councils of Mr. Pitt is not merely making an innocent mistake, but is offering an affront to the wisdom of his councils, under the appearance of doing him honour. And the guarding against any injurious imputations upon Mr. Pitt's designs, and the securing of Mr. Wolfe the intire merit, which belongs to him, is a piece of justice due them both.[33]

Mauduit's defence of Wolfe's reputation encompassed the hero's career and character, revealing that the accepted view of the hero could not be diminished in any way. Ironically, the article which Mauduit found so insulting to Wolfe had not been written to tarnish the hero image but as part of a defence of Conway's reputation. However by the mid-1760s, the myth of Wolfe as the great general and defender of British honour had become entrenched in national folklore. Mauduit's pamphlet demonstrates that an attack on the hero image, whether direct or indirect, warranted a defence of Wolfe's honour. His reputation had become directly connected to popular sentiments concerning Britain's status as a military and imperial power; therefore to slight Wolfe's memory insulted British prestige.

In the eighteenth century there were few patriotic symbols which were common to all classes. Wolfe's hero image had been accepted across the board as a representation of Britain's pre-eminence among other nations. Wolfe symbolized British strength and virtue over the evil influence of France. In this manner the hero image supports Newman's argument that

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[33]Ibid., p. 9.

the emerging British nationalism of the eighteenth century was the result of popular resentment against French cultural influence on the British aristocracy.[34] The defence of the hero reflects a growing awareness of Britain's national identity as an imperial power.

Wolfe's legend was also important in rallying patriotic sentiments concerning duty to the country. Along with being a symbol of British honour, Wolfe was also presented as an example of the importance of duty and sacrifice for the good of Britain. In a sermon preached in October 1759, Charles Bulkley reminded his congregation of the need to follow Wolfe's example:

> [W]hat an inspiring example we have of that magnanimitie and heroism; which it is to be hoped will fire the breast of everie British soldier with the generous ambition of recording his worth in the lasting characters of imitation? And thus may the death of a single hero be the means of making many.[35]

Only through like spirit and sacrifice could Britain retain its status as a military and imperial power. The hero image also portrayed the need for duty to religion to ensure the success of the Protestant cause. Wolfe as the hero came to

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[34]Newman, pp. 68-75.

[35]Bulkley, p. 18. See also "Epitaph for General Wolfe", Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 42, September 1772, p. 430, in which the poet relates the need to follow Wolfe's example of sacrifice: "And bid each warrior to emulate thy deeds,
Thus crown the man, who for his country bleeds."

epitomize how Britons wished to view themselves as well as their nation.

Wolfe's heroic image was created by writers and orators to please a popular audience. However the significance of the hero image goes beyond an exciting story of a great victory by a brave general. Wolfe's image incorporated the characteristics respected in the British nation according to writers and commentators - bravery, daring, strength, wisdom and Christian virtue. The reality of the man and his career was reshaped to fit the heroic image. Wolfe as the hero was not an elaborate ploy to mislead people, but rather the evolution of an image people expected of a hero. Commemoration of the hero was an acceptable form for ordinary subjects to express national pride at a time when official celebrations of the nation were restricted to days and events recognized by royal proclamation.

The heroic image was a very complex idea which illustrates eighteenth century notions on patriotism and nationalism. Wolfe became a symbol of national pride and honour, identifiable by people of all classes. He was depicted in a manner which reflected how Britons wished to view themselves. People could take pride in Wolfe's heroic fate; his was the strength and sacrifice needed to preserve the nation after years of defeats and embarrassments in the war with France. Yet the hero image was more than patriotic jingoism; it revealed a central aspect of the national

consciousness developing in eighteenth century Britain. The praise of Wolfe by writers, orators and poets reflects very intense feelings about the nation and wars for empire which brought Britain prestige and power. Pride in the country's reputation as a military and imperial power was directly associated with Wolfe. However the hero image was not merely reactionary, reflecting an anti-French sentiment during the war, but evolved into a British symbol of national pride.

CHAPTER III - The Hero Image in Art and Folklore

> Will any Briton pass unheeding by,
> Or view the tomb of Wolfe without a sigh?
> To him, who gave us empire, give a tear;
> Vict'ry, Quebec, Canada, grace his bier.
> In sculptur'd stone the wond'rous tale is told,
> In sculptur'd stone the god-like youth behold!
> Epitaph on General Wolfe, 1772.[1]

In the eighteenth century, public celebration of the hero was very prominent in art and folklore. Wolfe and the victory at Quebec were portrayed in a fashion which sought to enhance the glory of Britain on the world stage. From the beginning, in art and folklore the invented hero image with all its myths and fictions was more important than reality. Unlike prose or verse where a detailed description conveyed the idea of the hero image, artists had to depict the subject and theme in a manner any audience would at once understand.[2] In painting and sculpture, artists portrayed Wolfe's strengths and virtues by representing him as an ideal soldier - strong and handsome

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[1]"Epitaph on General Wolfe", Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 42, October 1772, p. 487.

[2]Paul Kleber Monod, Jacobitism and the English People 1688-1788, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 70. Monod argues that visual images had to be much more universal than the written word, which allowed description to convey details and allusions to the reader. The hero image in art had to relate the ideas of Wolfe's strength, courage and nobility, along with the sense of duty and sacrifice, in order to be properly understood and appreciated by any audience.

- in order to visualize the hero image and evoke emotions of pride and loss among the audience. Wolfe's image in art was a very complex form of hero worship which reflected patriotic sentiments of eighteenth century Britons. The popularity of the hero in art also reveals an interesting aspect concerning the profitable side of public celebration of a hero. The commercialization of the hero was part of the economic changes within a developing consumer society in the eighteenth century, in which more and more money was available for luxuries.

In folklore as in art, Wolfe was an object of patriotic glorification. In song and story, Wolfe's exploits were enhanced, making both the man and battle more heroic. Whether in painting, sculpture, or folklore the hero image evoked an atmosphere of romance, tragedy and above all patriotic glory. The fabricated hero image surrounding Wolfe and the battle at Quebec reveals in its starkest form a positive aspect of expressing nationalistic sentiments on the part of eighteenth century Britons.

The portrayal of Wolfe by artists as a handsome, brave and tragic figure was accepted as the proper visual representation of the hero. In art works the hero signified the glory of Britain; Wolfe became such a symbol of patriotism and nationalism. Artists visualized the patriotic ideas concerning Wolfe's nobility and virtue by embellishing the reality of the man and battle, in the same fashion as

contemporary writers and orators. Wolfe was depicted as handsome, strong and courageous, dying in a far-off land for the glory of Britain, while conquering new domains which would be the beginning of the empire. Artistic interpretation of the hero was not new to the eighteenth century. Throughout history heroes have been cast in publicly recognized forms in order to display a state's power and prestige.[3] The reality of the individual's physical form and character were enhanced or altered when visually presenting the hero in a symbolic manner which was understood and accepted by patrons. Both the elite and general public patronized works which depicted the glory of Wolfe and the nation and therefore were influential in the creation of the hero image. The emotional, religious and intellectual themes concerning Wolfe in art works had to conform to the generally accepted ideas of the hero image in order to convey the message of the glory and honour of Britain. The hero image in art and folklore represented the people's expectations of a national hero; the eighteenth century view of Wolfe has survived virtually intact for over two centuries. The following discussion will deal with the hero image in art and folklore, not in an artistic analysis, but in a historical context to show the influence of visual representations of Wolfe on eighteenth century ideas of patriotism and nationalism.

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[3]Robert Rotberg and Theodore Rabb, eds., Art and History: Images and Their Meaning, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 84. See also Burke, pp. 169-170.

Depictions of Wolfe in paintings and sculpture reveal that the hero image was more important than the reality of the man and battle. An idealized soldier - brave, strong and handsome - was the image which people identified as a hero. Since likenesses of Wolfe were not known to publishers, portrayals of him shortly after the battle had very little resemblance to the man. One such portrayal is an engraving of Wolfe published in the London Magazine in November 1759, as an accompaniment to an account of the battle of Quebec. The engraving depicted a stock heroic figure in military dress. The face was full with a strong chin and bore little resemblance to Wolfe.[4] The image projected was of an ideal military man, which would be recognized by the reading public as a hero. In the eighteenth century publishers were more concerned with attracting readers and selling issues than with an accurate depiction of reality. In the earliest works after the conquest, Wolfe was presented in the hero image which people would understand.

The portrayal of Wolfe in government sponsored medallions was no more accurate than in the popular press. Few medallions commemorating Wolfe or the battle have survived. One which is known shows a profile of Wolfe on one side and the British army in boats about to scale the cliffs to the city of Quebec on the other. The figure on the medallion

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[4]John Webster, Wolfe and the Artists: A Study of his Portraiture, p. 35.

bears no resemblance to Wolfe, but exhibits a distinct likeness to George II.[5] The depiction of a recognizable heroic figure was the important element of a commemorative medal. Though rough in design, the portrayal of Wolfe could have been more true to life. The resemblance to George II reflects the desire directly to associate the crown with the hero and victory. The victories of the Seven Years War resulted in popular celebrations concerning Britain's new role as an imperial power, reflecting patriotism and national pride, which focused on heroes rather than royalty. The medallions of Wolfe are representative of Colley's argument, that the administration was trying to promote the royal family rather than heroes such as Wolfe as a focus for popular veneration.[6]

Visualizing an ideal of Wolfe was not only common in the popular press, but was also accepted by elite patrons who preferred the hero image to reality. Artists who painted Wolfe after his death conformed to the hero image and only a few ever saw Wolfe or even a sketch of him from life. Portraits and sketches of Wolfe from life existed, but were not publicly known at the time of his death. Lieutenant John Montresor's sketch of Wolfe done at Quebec was first published

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[5]Ibid., pp. 59-60. Another medallion in honour of the conquest is known, but only Wolfe's name appears, with no likeness of the general.

[6]Linda Colley, "The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation, 1760-1820", Past and Present, No. 102 (February 1984) 97-99.

as an engraving in 1783.[7] Though portraits existed of Wolfe, artists who depicted him after his death tended to idealize the man and soften or remove his weaker physical characteristics, such as his double-chin and sloping shoulders. In the mid-eighteenth century, the neo-classical style was common in art and tended toward idealism, though in British portraiture subjects were often represented in a more realistic fashion. An example of British portrait style is Thomas Gainsborough's painting of Mary, Countess Howe, which has an artificial, mystical atmosphere, while the face of the figure is realistic, not portrayed with idealized beauty.[8] However, in the case of Wolfe, individual physical features were not merely idealized but replaced with an heroic ideal of a strong, courageous looking man.

In all posthumous portraits, Wolfe was portrayed looking healthy, handsome and strong. Artistic depiction of his face reflects the most striking alteration of reality. As previously described, Wolfe was not a handsome man. His face

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[7]A.E. Wolfe-Aylward, The Pictorial Life of Wolfe, (Plymouth, England: William Brendon and Sons, Ltd., 1927), p. 80. Other known sketches of Wolfe while at Quebec include that of George Townshend and Hervey Smith, see Wolfe-Aylward, preface and p. 81.

[8]Frederick Hartt, Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, Vol. II, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1976), pp. 293-294. See Bernard Denvir, The Eighteenth Century: Art, Design and Society, 1689-1789, (New York: Longman Group Ltd., 1983), pp. 123-124. An essay by Anthony Ashley Cooper entitled Freedom of Wit and Humour, discussed honest representations in art and the need to depict reality in portraiture.

was thin and angular, with a long nose and double-chin. In two portraits by Thomas Gainsborough, the artist portrayed Wolfe as an ideal hero. He was a young dashing soldier; an attractive man with a healthy full face and strong chin.[9] In one of Henry Schaak's portraits of Wolfe, commissioned by George III, the hero was shown in profile. Wolfe was again portrayed as an ideal hero - youthful and robust, with a firm chin and Grecian style nose.[10] In a bust sculpted by Joseph Wilton, Wolfe was idealized in a grand classical style. He was dressed in Roman costume, which was the fashionable way to portray great heroes in eighteenth century Britain.[11] The face was very idealized, with strong features, denoting the hero's awareness of his noble destiny.

The portraiture of Wolfe conveyed the hero image by depicting the man as an ideal soldier. None of the works after Wolfe's death portray his sloping shoulders and double-chin with accuracy. In the eighteenth century such

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[9]Wolfe-Aylward, pp. 59 and 83. One of Gainsborough's portraits, see p. 59, was commissioned by Katherine Lower, Wolfe's fiancee. The other portrait, see p. 83, was supposedly done from sketches made of Wolfe at Bath in 1758, though the artist greatly enhanced Wolfe's features, making him handsome and heroic.

[10]Ibid., p. 57. Another portrait of Wolfe by Schaak, see p. 81, was painted from a sketch done of Wolfe by Hervey Smith. The artist's rendition is more realistic than most posthumous portraits. However, Wolfe is made handsome and his distinctive double-chin greatly reduced.

[11]Webster, Wolfe and the Artists, p. 55. For Wilton's bust of Wolfe, see Margaret Whinney, Sculpture in Britain 1530 to 1830, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 108.

characteristics denoted a weak mind and body, which was not the proper form for a hero.[12] Artists survived and succeeded by pleasing their patrons and therefore works which idealized Wolfe represented the desire on the part of the audience, whether public or private, to see the conqueror of Quebec in the appropriate heroic style. From the beginning artists who portrayed Wolfe conformed to the accepted hero image in order to sell their work, and thus the false, though ideal, image of Wolfe perpetuated itself in art. The hero image encompassed more than Wolfe himself, but also comprised the glory and military might of Britain. Wolfe was the restorer of British military honour, and in turn artistic forms had to visually express the strengths and virtues respected by Britons.

The portraiture of Wolfe had a substantial audience among eighteenth century society, but was not as popular as artistic renditions of Wolfe's death on the battlefield. Publicly, few facts were known about where Wolfe died and who attended him. James Henderson, who claimed to have been with Wolfe when he died, wrote an account of the events dated October 7, 1759. According to Henderson, he carried the wounded general off the field. Some officers, most likely two, attended Wolfe with news of the victory before he died.[13] The accuracy of the detail in Henderson's letter may be debated, but scholars have

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[12]Webster, Wolfe and the Artists., p. 26.

[13]W.A.J. Archbold, ed., "A Letter Describing the Death of General Wolfe", English Historical Review, Vol. 12 (October 1897) 762-763.

accepted that Wolfe died with only a few men in attendance. With only vague details known by the public, artists tended to portray Wolfe's death in a manner befitting a gallant hero. An idealized Wolfe and the equally fictitious events of his death were accepted unquestioningly by the public audience. By the mid-eighteenth century there was greater public interest in the nation's past when depicted in a grand and glorious manner.[14] In depicting the death of Wolfe, artists attempted not only to portray an ideal of the hero, but also to evoke a sense of tragedy, romance and patriotism among the audience.

One of the earliest depictions of Wolfe's death was painted by Edward Penny in 1763. The work portrays Wolfe surrounded by three soldiers, all in contemporary military dress.[15] One of the soldiers gestures to a messenger bearing news of the British victory. The grouping of characters was one of the more historically accurate artistic renditions of Wolfe's death. However, Penny still portrayed Wolfe as an idealized hero. The general's handsome face looks serenely towards heaven. Wolfe peacefully accepts his fate; his duty to the country fulfilled with the news of victory. The work

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[14]Charles Mitchell, "Benjamin West's 'Death of General Wolfe' and the Popular History Piece", Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, Vol. 7 (1944) 27-29.

[15]Wolfe-Aylward, p. 77. Penny's work was one of many which went against accepted fashions of neo-classical eighteenth century painting, in which heroes were to be depicted in classical costume and settings.

relates Wolfe's sacrifice but also conveys the glory of dying for the country's cause. Penny's work represents one of the first efforts at a depiction of Wolfe as a hero by highlighting the tragedy of his death. Though emotional, the painting does not seek dramatic effect as would its successors.

The most famous Death of Wolfe was painted by Benjamin West, which portrayed the general's death with emotion, patriotism and most importantly as an event of high drama. In the painting Wolfe dies in a tragically allegorical scene, in the midst of the battle surrounded by a number of soldiers and officers.[16] The battle raging in the background and the turbulent, dark sky add an atmosphere of power, tension and emotion to the work. Wolfe dies in a lamentation pose, falling back into the arms of a soldier; the pose being a device used in Christian art to depict the sacrifice of Christ and the emotions and sense of loss of the group mourning him after he had been brought down from the cross.[17] The hero's face bears little resemblance to the man himself. Wolfe's visage expresses pain, yet serene acceptance of his fate. The

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[16]Ibid., p. 72. Another example of an allegorical death scene is the less well known Death of Wolfe by James Barry, see p. 90. The setting is similar to West's, though Wolfe is away from the battle and attended by only five men. He is portrayed in a classical dying pose, partially nude as a soldier attends his wounds. He turns to a messenger bringing news of victory. The faces of the soldiers show emotions of grief and loss. The work was exhibited in 1776, but did not have the public success of West's painting.

[17]Mitchell, p. 31. See also Hartt p. 671.

emotions of loss and grief are expressed on the faces of those surrounding Wolfe, connecting the viewer with the events in the painting.[18] The whole composition is dramatic and emotional, revealing the glory of Britain's military success overseas. Wolfe dies amidst triumph, while above him a soldier holds the battle flag of Britain.

The rousing success of West's Death of Wolfe lay in the representation of the hero image and the portrayal of Britain's status as an unquestioned military and imperial power. Historical inaccuracies were of no concern to the public, which flocked to see the work at the Royal Academy. The painting appealed to patriotic and nationalistic feelings concerning Britain, even though the work was, as Webster has stated, "highly melodramatic and grotesquely false."[19] The painting was very popular among all classes. George III ordered West to make a copy for him, after having originally refused to patronize the work based on Joshua Reynolds' advice.[20] West's work idealized not only the hero, but also dramatized the events of Wolfe's death more than other paintings before it. The scene carried the viewer's

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[18]Ibid., pp. 31-32.

[19]Webster, Wolfe and the Artists, p. 67. See also Simon Schama, Dead Certainties: Unwarranted Speculations, (Toronto: Random House, 1991), pp. 21-22, 28-30.

[20]Mitchell, p. 31. Joshua Reynolds, also a member of the Royal Academy and artistic rival of West, told George III that West's depiction of Wolfe in contemporary military dress was not suitable for such a hero and that West should use classical costume as was the fashion.

imagination to a far-off, foreign land in the midst of an exciting and decisive battle, which brought military success and greater imperial power to Britain. Since Wolfe had restored Britain's military honour after the defeats and embarrassments of the first years of the Seven Years War, it was understandable that the public enthusiastically patronized a work which showed the country's glory and prestige in the hero's death. The success of West's Death of Wolfe reveals that popular patriotism applied equally to the event as well as the man.

Public enthusiasm over the death-of-the-hero motif also applied to Joseph Wilton's depiction of Wolfe in the monument at Westminster Abbey, The plan to erect a monument was voted by Parliament in November 1759, but it was not completed and unveiled until October 1773. The sculpture depicted the moment of Wolfe's death in allegorical fashion.[21] The composition mixed classical and realistic figures in an attempt to create drama and emotion.[22] Wolfe was portrayed nude as a classical hero, dying in the arms of a grenadier who gestured toward a classical Victory bearing a laurel and palm. The two grenadiers were depicted realistically in contemporary uniforms, in opposition to the classical figures of Wolfe and Victory. The general was very idealized, strong in body and features; bearing little resemblance to the Wolfe of reality.

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[21]Wolfe-Aylward, p. 112 and Whinney, p. 109.

[22]Whinney, p. 138.

At the base of the monument sat two majestic lions, symbols of strength and of Britain. Though the monument has been criticized for its artistic composition, the portrayal of the hero by Wilton aroused great public interest.[23] The monument represented the pride and strength of the British nation as a military and imperial power among European nations, a status which was symbolized by Wolfe.

Wolfe was presented in eighteenth century painting and sculpture as an ideal hero - strong, courageous and triumphal. An accurate depiction of the man and events of his death were unimportant in the attempt to visualize the hero image which the public expected of Wolfe. The most publicly celebrated renditions of Wolfe's death, those of West and Wilton, were the least realistic but the most inspiring in terms of national pride and honour. By the mid-eighteenth century, the British had a greater understanding of their country's status as a military and colonial power is revealed in the patriotic themes found in art depicting contemporary heroes.[24] Both public and private audiences wholeheartedly accepted the idealized view of Wolfe; the hero in art visually symbolizing the glory of Britain.

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[23]Webster, Wolfe and the Artists, p. 68. A number of proposed inscriptions were submitted by people and many were printed in the Gentleman's Magazine, which shows the public enthusiasm for the monument even though it took thirteen years to complete.

[24]Mitchell, p. 28.

The popularity of Wolfe's hero image is vividly revealed when examining the commercialization of the hero in the eighteenth century. The profitability of marketing hero paraphernalia, particularly engravings, was one aspect of the changing economic orientation in Britain towards a consumer society. Increased income among classes of businessmen, professionals and tradesmen allowed for a greater indulgence of luxury goods.[25] In the eighteenth century it was fashionable to celebrate great heroes and victories. Such occasions were not only a source of popular patriotic commemoration but were also profitable opportunities for those who created hero paraphernalia.[26] The marketing of Wolfe's hero image was a lucrative business because of the popular enthusiasm and patriotic sentiments associated with the man who restored British military honour in the Seven Years War. In the eighteenth century mezzotint engravings of paintings was the primary way art was made available to a large public market.[27] The most popular engravings of Wolfe were from

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[25]Neil McKendrick, "Commercialization and the Economy" in The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth Century England, (London: Hutchinson and Company, 1982), pp. 19, 23.

[26]John Brewer, "Commercialization and Politics" in The Birth of a Consumer Society, pp. 248-249.

[27]Brenda Rix, Pictures for the Parlour: the English Reproductive Print from 1775 to 1900, (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1983), p. 15.

paintings which depicted the hero's death. Penny's 1764 Death of Wolfe was engraved and prints sold well in Britain.[28]

Though many different engravings were done of Wolfe, the most popular and profitable was William Woollett's engraving of West's Death of Wolfe. The engraving was first published in 1776 and was in great demand in Britain, the colonies and Europe. The engraving has been described by Brenda Rix as "the best selling print of the century."[29] The popularity for the engraving resulted in estimated sales amounting to £15,000 by 1790.[30] Selling the hero image was a very profitable business in the eighteenth century, which was not only part of the change to a consumer, luxury orientated economy, but also part of the desire of the general public to express patriotic sentiments by purchasing engravings of Wolfe. The phenomenal success of Woollett's engraving shows that the public preferred to patronize a work which idealized Wolfe and represented British military glory and power.

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[28]Webster, Wolfe and the Artists, p. 61. Engravings of portraits of Wolfe also sold well, as did other depictions of Wolfe at Quebec, such as R. Houston's ca.1760-1762 engraving of Wolfe directing troops as the army climbed the cliffs to the Plains of Abraham, see p. 30.

[29]Rix, p. 21. Woollett was appointed 'Engraver to the King' after thirty impressions of the Death of Wolfe were made because of the exquisite depiction and popularity of the work. All prints after this included Woollett's prestigious title under his name.

[30]John Pye, Patronage of British Art, (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1845), pp. 244-245, n54. Sales of the print on the continent were estimated to be worth between £6000 and £7000. see n53.

Official celebration of the country's status as an imperial power was usually restricted to the elite. However, the phenomenal success of Woollett's engraving reveals the perception that through hero worship, the public were allowed, in a limited manner, to participate in national celebration of Britain's overseas conquests.

Public celebration of the hero was not confined to appreciation of art work, but also existed in popular songs and stories known in Britain and the colonies. The heroic tale of Wolfe's victory and death was incorporated into British folklore. In song and story the exploits of Wolfe were enhanced, creating a romantic, legendary hero. Unlike the popular press or art, popular songs and lore which venerated Wolfe are more representative of public ideas of the hero, because the medium was generally not part of the elite culture. Popular celebrations of Wolfe embodied the heroic ideals found in art and literature, and thus represent a myth which was common among the general public.[31] Shortly after the battle of Quebec a number of songs were composed as part of the popular celebration of the nation's great victory over the French. Versions of many of the songs were known in Britain and the colonies. One song which exemplifies the mythical aspect of the hero in folklore was Brave Wolfe. In the song, details of the events of the battle and Wolfe's

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[31]See Mackenzie, p. 9, for a discussion of cross-class elements of popular culture in relation to late nineteenth century British imperialism.

death were altered in an almost fanciful manner, making the incident more heroic. The song tells of Wolfe and Montcalm meeting just before the battle:

> Montcalm and this brave youth together walked,
> Between two armies they, like brothers, talked,
> Till each one took his post and did retire,
> It was then these numerous hosts commenced their fire.[32]

The generals talking together before the battle relate the idea of gallant and noble men, not the reality of Wolfe's desperate and daring plan or Montcalm's dread of being forced to fight a better trained force on open ground. The verse conveys the tragic fate awaiting the generals, as if both already knew the outcome of the battle. In the same song the events of Wolfe's death are retold in a more heroic fashion. In reality Wolfe was shot three times while leading his men against the enemy. However according to the song, the general was "shot off his horse."[33] The fact that the British had no horses at the battle of Quebec was not important. It was part of mythical tradition that brave generals leading armies rode

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[32]Alan Lomax, The Folksong of North America in the English Language, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1960), p. 42, verse 4. Brave Wolfe was also known by the titles Bold Wolfe and The Death of the Brave General Wolfe. It was first published in Boston in 1759 and was still in print almost a century later, see p. 32. See also Fowke and Mills, Canada's Story in Song, p. 47. Other songs published about the battle include General Wolfe, which relates Wolfe's courage facing death and the honour brought to Britain by the victory, see Fowke and Mills, pp. 50-51.

[33]Lomax, p. 42, verse 7.

horses into battle. The song's message was the glory of the hero and therefore the nation.

Thomas Paine, famous from the American Revolution, wrote a song in 1759 in honour of the victory, entitled The Death of General Wolfe in which the general was praised in heroic terms and associated with mythical deities. As Wolfe lay dying on the battlefield, Jove sends Mercury to bring the hero to heaven.[34] The underlying message of the song is very patriotic and nationalistic. As Wolfe is brought to heaven to live in triumph among the gods, so too is the honour and glory of Britain placed above all other nations. Songs about the hero reveal feelings of national pride among British subjects. Altering the reality of the man and battle emphasized the glory of Britain and was also an important aspect of how the people understood the military and imperial aspects of the national identity.

Legendary events concerning Wolfe's actions at Quebec also became part of the national folklore. One of the most famous stories was that Wolfe recited Thomas Gray's Elegy in a Country Churchyard as the British army made their way to the landing point on the eve of the battle. The romantic tale relates Wolfe's supposed knowledge of his tragic fate. It was

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[34]William Vander Weyde, ed., The Life and Works of Thomas Paine, Vol. X, (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Thomas Paine National Historical Association, 1925), 301-302. The song was written in 1759, soon after the news reached England and was sung at the Headstrong Club in Lewes, England where Paine was a member. The song also was published in the Pennsylvania Magazine in 1775, Paine being the editor.

to the grave", the general told his men, "Gentlemen, I would have rather written those lines than take Quebec."[35] However heroic and romantic the story, Wolfe would have broken his own order of absolute silence and risked detection by French guards if he had indeed recited the poem while in the boats. The Elegy myth romanticized beliefs about duty and sacrifice for the glory of Britain during the Seven Years War. The story promoted the hero image of Wolfe as the example which Britons should follow in order for their country to survive and prosper.

The hero image in art and folklore reveals the preference of people of the eighteenth century for a visual representation of their ideas concerning Wolfe which represented him as strong and noble. Men such as West and Wilton portrayed Wolfe in a manner which depicted the hero image, but just as importantly the patriotic ideas of Britain's glory and honour as a great military power. The art of hero worship represents an aspect of the recognition of Britain's expanding power overseas. Visual representations of the hero image portrayed Wolfe as an ideal soldier which people recognized - strong, bold and handsome. In songs and

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[35]R.G. Moyles, "Those Paths of Glory: General Wolfe and the Romantic School of British Imperial History", Beaver (August-September 1989) 4. Moyles' article discusses the Elegy myth and Wolfe in terms of nineteenth century imperialism. The story was still part of Wolfe's hero image until into the mid-twentieth century. See W.F. Morley, Elegy: A Commemoration of the Death of General Wolfe, (Providence, R.I.: privately published, 1959).

folklore, as in the popular press, the drama and romance of Wolfe's death were emphasized to add to the tragedy of the hero and importance of the conquest. The tradition of the hero image in art and folklore reveals how public opinion helped create an image through the acceptance of those works which most clearly represented the ideal hero. By the end of the eighteenth century, the reality of Wolfe and the battle were no longer as important as the hero image. The image of Wolfe represented not only an ideal soldier as an example of duty and sacrifice, but also nationalistic pride through a British symbol.

CHAPTER IV - Myth Versus Reality

The invented image of Wolfe presented in the popular press, art and folklore epitomized people's expectations of a hero and the prestige of Britain becoming a military and imperial power. Previous chapters have focused on the development of the hero image, which resulted in an overshadowing of the realities of the man and battle in expressing patriotic sentiments concerning Britain's honour and glory. Wolfe's appearance, character and career were moulded to conform with accepted ideals of an eighteenth century hero. Wolfe himself symbolized the greatness and glory of the nation and people. The hero image was separated from practical realities and problems of the conquest. Throughout the peace treaty debate, which encompassed discussions on the value of Canada and problems of accommodating the French colonists, Wolfe remained a symbol of British honour and military power upon which the treaty debate did not intrude. Though Wolfe was honoured by the king and government, official praise was subdued in comparison with the celebrated veneration of the hero by the public. Wolfe was a popular hero and for the most part non-political. Instances exist where Wolfe's hero image was employed in political writing, but the hero was usually utilized in an attempt to

generate patriotic sentiments rather than simple opposition to the government. Epitaphs for Wolfe's monument in Westminster Abbey proposed by members of the public celebrated and praised the hero and nation, and compared with the actual inscription on the monument, show that public patriotism concerning Wolfe was not translated into official hero worship. Contrasting public debates on the value of Canada and the different scope of government celebrations with popular praise of Wolfe reveals how the hero image, once entrenched in popular culture, was neither tarnished nor affected by reality.

The hero image was associated with victory and glory, but not with the realities of conquest. By contrasting views of the hero with those on Canada and the peace treaty, the separation of myth and reality in the popular press is revealed. Wolfe appealed to ideas of patriotism and national prestige, but was not associated with the practical problems of governing a vast territory and a foreign, Catholic population. From the time news of the victory reached Britain writers, orators and artists continually praised Wolfe's conquest even though the city of Quebec was not secure and the French still held the rest of the colony. Yet in the language of popular praise, it was not Quebec that was prized as much as the glory and prestige brought to Britain by the hero's victory over the French. In the pamphlet, A Letter to the Right Honourable Patriot... the conquest was directly associated with Wolfe's heroic image and referred to as "so

glorious an Acquisition."[1] Generally Quebec was glorified when associated with the hero as a justification for Wolfe's actions and death. The hero could only have sacrificed himself for an important and valuable conquest.

By the end of 1760 Canada was under British control, though the final defeat of the French had not been as easy as predicted after the fall of Quebec. During negotiations for the peace treaty in 1762 and 1763, the value and problems of the colony were debated by members of Parliament and the popular press in practical, and not entirely favourable terms, and most importantly without the praise and celebration associated with Wolfe. When discussed outside the scope of the hero image, Canada was believed to have little commercial value and one of its few redeeming aspects was the security the colony, as a British possession, gave to the American colonies. A great deal of material was published concerning Canada and despite criticism of the colony, the majority believed the it should remain a British possession.[2] To many, including politicians, increased trade was the greatest benefit of any acquisition and often necessary to compensate for costs of war and administrating new territories. During

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[1]Grove, p. 35. Another example is found in the"Address to the Citizens of London", Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 29, October 1759, p. 495, in which the victory was termed the "last and most important conquest".

[2]Philip Lawson, The Imperial Challenge: Quebec and Britain in the Age of the American Revolution, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), pp. 9-12.

the peace treaty debate, Richard Rigby, M.P., opposed keeping Canada because he believed the colony did not have much commercial value: "Canada gave us only furs; yet hats were not become cheaper."[3] The 1761 pamphlet, Considerations on the Approaching Peace, has one of the most detailed discussions of the problems and values of the colony:

> [I]t is a country too sharp for Englishmen to live in. It is excessive cold, and inaccessible half the year, and many parts of it very barren and taking ten years together, it does not produce provisions sufficient for its inhabitants, therefore it received supplies from France. Its only valuable commodity is furs and skins, and not enough of those to pay for the woollen and other manufactures from France; therefore, in point of trade, it was rather a burden than a profit to the French, ... I will venture to say that we shall not reap much advantage from it in point of commerce; its great value to us is, that our fertile colonies [American colonies] will enjoy peace and quiet, and be no more annoyed from thence.[4]

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[3]Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliament Respecting North America, 1754-1783, Vol. I, p. 386. The fur trade was seen by many as Canada's only contribution to British trade and was not considered of great commercial value. Rigby's sentiments were echoed in the pamphlet, Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe at a Peace Preferable to Canada, Explained in Five Letters from a Gentleman in Guadaloupe to his Friend in London, London, 1761, p. 6, "Canada, of itself worth little or nothing but, first, a little improvement of the fur trade".

[4]Considerations on the Approaching Peace, London, 1762, p. 23. For discussions on Canada's value to Britain, see also Proceedings and Debates Respecting North American, pp. 414-420, Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe ..., and Benjamin Franklin, Interests of Great Britain Considered, With Regard to Her Colonies and with the Acquisitions of Canada and Guadaloupe, London, 1761. Not all discussions were critical of the colony. One example of a favourable report on Quebec was published in the London Chronicle, October 13-16, 1759, entitled "Extract of a letter from an Officer ...".

Almost all discussions on the colony which focused on its economic value did not include any of the rhetoric associated with the hero image. There was no praise or glorification of a land inhabited by French colonists and Indians.

Another key aspect of the value of Canada concerned removal of the French threat in North America and the security of Britain and the American colonies. Canada's security value was debated in a series of pamphlets which debated what conquests should be kept at the peace, particularly comparing Canada and Guadaloupe.[5] The language of the pamphleteers again focused on practical aspects of security for British possessions and not the celebration of the conquest as associated with Wolfe. Of concern was how the presence or absence of the French rule in Canada would affect British security. In the 1761 pamphlet, Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe at a Peace ..., the restoration of Canada to the French was seen as the only way to ensure the continued dependence of the American colonies:

> Nothing can secure Britain so much against the revolting of North America, as the French keeping some footing there ... but if we acquire Canada, we should soon find North America itself too powerful

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[5]The debate on keeping and restoring territory was not a straightforward choice as presented in the Canada versus Guadaloupe pamphlets. However the pamphlets represent part of the overall debate on what to do with territory acquired during the war. See Lawson, The Imperial Challenge, pp. 9-13 for a discussion of Canada in the peace treaty debate.

and too populous to be long governed by us at this distance.[6]

Those on the other side of the debate contended that restoring Canada would not only endanger the security and prosperity of the American colonies, but also might lead to another war with France in North America. A 1761 pamphlet by Benjamin Franklin concerning the Canada/Guadaloupe debate, focused on the necessity of retaining Canada to ensure the safety and prosperity of the American colonies:

> If we leave Canada, however circumscribed, to the French, we have done nothing; we shall soon be made sensible ourselves of this truth, and to our cost. ... Canada in the hands of the French has always stinted the growth of our colonies.[7]

The author of the pamphlet, A Letter to the People ..., expressed great concern for British and American security and believed the restoration of Canada would lead to another costly war. The only way to secure a lasting peace in North America was to retain the colony:

> [T]he principle objection that appears to me against giving up any part of Canada is the danger we thereby run of giving occasion, in a few years, for another war.[8]

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[6]Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe ..., p. 8.

[7]Franklin, p. 13, 19. See also Considerations on the Approaching Peace, p. 32.

[8]A Letter to the People on the Necessity of Putting an Immediate end to the War: and The Means of Obtaining an Advantageous Peace, London, 1760, p. 47. See also Franklin, Interests of Great Britain Considered ..., p. 8.

Concern for British security was also expressed by William Pitt during the treaty debate in Parliament. Pitt made a long speech, over three and one-half hours, lambasting the treaty for giving away all Britain had gained and allowing the French again to become a threat. The only aspect of the treaty he supported was the retention of Canada:

> Experience has shewn us that while France possesses any single place in America, from whence she may molest our settlements, they can never enjoy any repose. ... To remove France from our neighbourhood in America, or to contract her power within the narrowest possible limits, is therefore the most capital advantage we can obtain.[9]

During the debate over the treaty, both in Parliament and the popular press, the value of Canada was questioned but not the conquest itself. The colony's usefulness in areas of trade and security were issues of great debate, but no writer or orator questioned the glory and honour brought to the nation by the victory or Wolfe's status as a popular hero. When the treaty was approved, most believed British interests were conceded to France for the sake of a quick peace. After the conquest, one writer in the London Chronicle expressed his frustration with the government's conduct in the peace negotiations: "it has always been the character of the English to fight strongly and negotiate weakly."[10] The

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[9]Proceedings and Debates Respecting North America, 9 December 1762, p. 422.

[10]London Chronicle, December 25-27, 1759, p. 616. Many believed the peace treaty was bad for Britain. William Pitt stated in Parliament, "we retain nothing although we had

treaty debate represented the practical legal and administrative challenges of acquiring new territory and not the ideals of patriotism and glory associated with Wolfe. Trade, security and adaptation of eighteenth century concepts of governing were the main concerns of writers and politicians. As a result the language of the treaty debate was not related to the rhetoric of the hero image. Patriotism and national pride associated with Wolfe were not part of the treaty debate. Wolfe's status as a great hero was never questioned, even by those who believed Canada was of no economic value to Britain. The absence of the hero image in the treaty debate on Canada reveals the distinct and most likely conscious separation of the popular hero from the practical realities of the conquest. The hero was removed from problematic aspects of the conquest and thereby remained an untarnished symbol of British honour and prestige.

The hero image of Wolfe represented patriotic spirit and duty in a fashion which appealed to people of all classes. However popular Wolfe was among the public, his image was generally not applied in the political sphere by either the opposition or government. The hero image was seldom employed to convey a political message. On occasions when Wolfe was used by opposition writers, he was presented in a manner to

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conquered everything", Proceedings and Debates Respecting North America, p. 421. The peace treaty was faulted for many years as the cause of problems in both Britain and the colonies, see Independent Chronicle, December 18-20, 1769, p. 1.

solicit patriotic support for a cause. Official celebrations of the hero were generally subdued and non-political. According to Colley's work on government praise of heroes, the crown and ministry tended not to celebrate military or naval heroes with the same enthusiasm as the public.[11] Perhaps a hero such as Wolfe, though dead, was still too much of a popular figure for the government to celebrate or employ as an official symbol of British military and imperial power.

An interesting example of Wolfe's hero image invoked in a political cause was a work by Thomas Paine entitled, A Dialogue Between General Wolfe and General Gage in a Wood Near Boston.[12] In the dialogue, the ghost of Wolfe persuades

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[11]Linda Colley, "Whose Nation? Class and National Consciousness in Britain 1750 - 1830", Past and Present, No. 113, November 1986, p. 105. Heroes which were opposition figures, such as Admiral Vernon, were problematic to the government and therefore the administration preferred to promote the royal family rather than military or naval heroes. See also Wilson, "Empire, Trade and Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon"; Colley, "The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760-1820"; and Cannadine, "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition' c. 1820-1977" in The Invention of Tradition' eds., Hobsbawn and Ranger.

[12]Thomas Paine, "A Dialogue Between General Wolfe and General Gage ...", The Life and Works of Thomas Paine, Vol. II, pp. 11-16. The essay was published in the Pennsylvania Journal in 4 January 1775. General Thomas Gage was the British governor of Massachusetts colony when colonists rebelled against British authority over the colonies. Another example of Wolfe used in a political statement was a poem on Pitt's resignation in 1761, which associated the hero's patriotic sacrifice with the loss to the country of the patriot minister whom people believed responsible for the turn in British fortunes during the war. See, Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 31, November 1761, p. 528.

General Thomas Gage not to act against the colonists of Massachusetts even though they oppose his administration. The message of the essay concerns the power of the Ministry and Parliament to enact arbitrary laws over the colonists. Wolfe, a hero of the people in Britain and the colonies, is employed to promote and associate patriotic sentiments with the issue of liberty and the rights of freemen under British rule. Wolfe reminds Gage that the duty of a British soldier is to act for the good of the nation and not merely executing Parliament's orders:

> I am sent by a group of British heroes to remonstrate with you upon your errand to this place. You have come upon a business unworthy of a British soldier, and a freeman. You have come here to deprive your fellow subjects of their liberty.[13]

The choice of Wolfe as the messenger reflects the desire to appeal to the audience through a symbol of patriotic duty and sacrifice. The cause of the American colonists and contention over the Quebec Act were linked with Wolfe's victory, thereby associating patriotic ideas about the hero with the opposition cause of the colonists. Wolfe's sacrifice was presented as being for the same ideals of liberty that the colonists were then demanding:

> [T]he late proceedings of the British Parliament towards the American colonists have reached the British heroes in Elysium, and have produced a suspension in their happiness. The Quebec Bill in

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[13]Paine, p. 11.

> a particular manner has roused their resentment. It was once the glory of Englishmen to draw the sword only in defense of liberty and the Protestant religion, or to extend the blessings of both to their unhappy neighbours. These god-like motives reconciled me to all the hardships of that campaign which ended in the reduction of Canada. ... I rejoiced less in the hour of my death, in the honour of my victory, than in the glory of having communicated to an inslaved people the glorious privileges of an English constitution.[14]

If the heroes of Britain's past were concerned with the power of Parliament over individual liberty, then so should all British subjects. The point of the dialogue was political, but also patriotic in the appeal to ideas on the constitution and liberties of freemen. The association of the American cause and Wolfe's sacrifice reveals how the hero image could be employed to make a contentious political stand more acceptable to a popular audience.

Though the hero image was generally non-political, Paine's essay reveals how patriotism connected with Wolfe could be used for a political cause. Wolfe was extremely popular outside the political realm in both America and Britain, but he was not an object for official hero worship. The administration did not patronize heroes outside the royal family, most certainly because of the political activities of popular heroes such as Vernon and Clive, which resulted in a fear that any hero, even Wolfe, could be a threat to the

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[14]Paine, p. 14. See Lawson, The Imperial Challenge, pp. 141, 147 for discussion of American reaction to the Quebec Act.

government. As well, official celebration of military and naval heroes had the potential to raise their popularity higher than that of the royal family.[15] At the time of Wolfe's victory the government celebrated the hero, but also the crown and administration's role in the conquest.[16] Though the House of Commons sponsored a monument to Wolfe in Westminster Abbey, the hero status accorded to Wolfe was the result of popular enthusiasm rather than state patronage. The language employed in celebration of Wolfe's monument and epitaph reveals the different attitudes on the part of the government and people concerning the significance of the hero and victory to the British nation.[17]

The conquest of Quebec occurred at a time of low morale after years of defeats and embarrassments for the British in the war against France. The victory resulted in praise of Wolfe by the people and government. Speeches were given by members of Parliament and peers, and an official day of thanksgiving proclaimed to honour Wolfe. Among Members of Parliament, the greatest praise of the hero came from the man who sent Wolfe to Quebec, William Pitt:

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[15]See Colley, "The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760-1820" for a discussion of the promotion of royalty over heroes in popular celebration.

[16]Proceedings and Debates Respecting North America, pp. 302-304.

[17]See below, pp. 73-78, for discussion of popular and official celebrations of Wolfe.

> Mr. Pitt moved the House of Commons to order a monument for General Wolfe; and, in a low and plaintive voice, pronounced a kind of funeral oration. It was, perhaps, the worst harangue he ever uttered. His eloquence was too native not to suffer by being crowded into a ready-prepared mould. The story did but flatten the pathetic of the topic. ... The horror of the night, the precipice scaled by Wolfe, the empire he with a handful of men added to England, and the glorious catastrophe of contentedly terminating life where his fame began.[18]

The most noteworthy official praise of Wolfe was the monument erected in Westminster Abbey. Though voted by the Commons in November 1759, the monument was not unveiled until 1773.[19] The public responded enthusiastically to the proposed monument as an appropriate memorial to a great hero. There was much speculation in the popular press on the style and inscription of the monument. In the pamphlet, A Letter to the Right Honourable Patriot ..., the author advised on the importance of designing the monument so that the public could appreciate both the art and inscription:

> It has been affirmed that his majesty has given directions for the erecting what has been so gratefully desired; and it is hoped that there will be inscribed on the Monument an English

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[18] Pitt's speech was given on 21 November 1759, Proceedings and Debates Respecting North America, pp. 304-305.

[19] Parliament voted a sum of £3000 for the design and sculpting of the monument to Wolfe, (London Chronicle, October 30 - November 1, 1759, p. 422). The commission was given to Joseph Wilton, who completed the monument in 1773. The monument was a tremendous success with the public despite the thirteen year delay, though, in a 1760 article in the London Chronicle, the writer foresaw little delay to the monument's completion, (April 19-22, 1760, p. 386).

> inscription, as well as a Latin one, and in such large characters that the Old with the Young, may be able to read it.[20]

The traditional language for inscriptions was Latin. Proposals were put forth in the popular press to include an English inscription, implying a desire to admit the public into official praise and thereby recognizing Wolfe's status as a popular hero and national symbol. The influence of the public in official hero worship is revealed by the fact the epitaph placed on the monument was entirely in English. Though the inscription was in the language of the people, the wording of the epitaph was far from the illustrious praise of Wolfe common in the popular press. The official inscription did praise Wolfe, but not in an eloquent and glorifying style:

> In Memory of James Wolfe
> Major-General and Commander in Chief
> of the British Land Forces
> On the Expedition Against Quebec
> Who After Surmounting by Ability and Valour
> All Obstacles of Art and Nature
> Was Slain in the Moment of Victory
> on the XIII of September MDCCLIX
> The King and Parliament of Great Britain
> Dedicated this Monument[21]

Though the monument's inscription was meant to appeal to the public by the sole use of English, the dedication excluded the people. The king and Parliament represented the

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[20]Grove, p. 57. See also Pringle, The Life of General James Wolfe ..., p. 31.

[21]Wolfe-Aylward, p. 112.

official commemoration of Wolfe on the part of the nation. As well the epitaph lacked the patriotic and nationalistic sentiments expounded in popular celebration of the hero.

A number of epitaphs were proposed by members of the public before the monument was completed which reflected popular ideas on hero worship and the country's status as a military power. In most popular inscriptions the role of the king and Parliament was not viewed as an integral part of celebration of Wolfe and the victory. In the pamphlet, The Life of General James Wolfe ..., the author proposed an inscription which proclaimed Britain and its people as the beneficiaries of Wolfe's sacrifice:

A Monumental Inscription (Latin and English)

Britons! rejoice and mourn;
Rejoice that your Arms have prospered
Under the Conduct of so Great a General:
But mourn for the Loss
Of so Good a Man
Whose Morals, A Copy of Gospel Purity,
Taught him to die Contented for his Country.[22]

Pringle's epitaph reflected the popular view of Wolfe as the courageous, Christian soldier who sacrificed his life for the good of Britain.

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[22]Pringle, p. 31. Wolfe's virtues and noble character were a common theme in many proposed inscriptions, see also London Chronicle, December 1-4, 1759, p. 537, and Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 42, September 1772, p. 430 and October 1772, p. 487.

Similar patriotic sentiments are found in lines from a proposed inscription published in the Gentleman's Magazine:

... The great, the good, the generous, and the brave,
GENERAL WOLFE
Without Repining
At the Race of Glory.
Appointed by Mr. Pitt,
Who, under an auspicious Providence,
Elevated the British Empire
From the Lowest Contempt,
And most disgraceful Condition,
To the highest Pitch of Glory.[23]

The epitaph acknowledges Pitt's role in the expedition, which is not surprising considering many believed the 'patriot minister' responsible for turning the war in Britain's favour. The idea of a British empire is of importance in reflecting Britain's status among other European powers competing for overseas conquests. Wolfe was often credited with the emergence of British imperial power after the Seven Years War. In an Epitaph for General Wolfe, the poet glorifies Wolfe as "him, who gave us empire."[24] For the people, Wolfe's victory was acknowledged as a boost to morale and patriotic pride at a low point of the war.

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[23]Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 42, September 1772, p. 431. See also Gentleman's Magazine, September 1772, p. 432.

[24]Epitaph for General Wolfe, in the Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 42, October 1772, p. 487. See also To the Memory of General Wolfe, in the Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 29, November 1759, p. 539.

Lines from the epitaph on a monument to Wolfe erected by the people of Westerham reveal how the hero's prestige reflected on the status and pride of the country and people:

> ... Struck with thy fall, we shed a general tear,
> With humble grief inscribe one artless stone,
> And from thy matchless honours date our own.[25]

The epitaphs proposed by members of the public reflect popular enthusiasm for Wolfe because he restored the nation's honour as a military power. The language of the Westminster monument's inscription reveals that the public had little influence on the crown and government's celebration of heroes. The government's subdued praise of Wolfe reflects a gulf between itself and the public which enthusiastically celebrated heroes such as Wolfe and Nelson. Through praise of Wolfe the people were able to express patriotism and national pride in a society wherein the people were for the most part excluded from official celebrations.

Despite a lack of crown and government celebration of Wolfe, he continued to be a focus for expressing British honour and glory in popular culture. After the conquest of Quebec, the hero image was separate from the practical realities of the war and governing a foreign, Catholic population, and thus remained untarnished by the treaty

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[25]Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 30, April 1760, p. 201. See also Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 42, December 1772, p. 588.

debate on Canada. Wolfe was elevated above what he had been in life through the popular press and public hero worship. The image of a strong, courageous and virtuous soldier was what the people came to accept as the proper ideal of a hero. Through the hero image, Wolfe symbolized national pride and prestige and even on the few occasions the hero image was used for political purposes, the appeal was to patriotic sentiments. Above all Wolfe was a popular hero who remained apart from controversy and thereby was able to endure as a national symbol of the strength and sacrifice required to preserve the country and begin a new chapter as an imperial power.

CHAPTER V - POSTSCRIPT

> No private loss, no close domestic tye,
> No partial grief I murmur all alone;
> I join a nation in the heart felt sigh,
> And speak a people's sorrow in my own.
> An Elegy.
> On the Death of General Wolfe.[1]

The patriotic praise which extolled Wolfe as the strong and noble hero also related how to his image served as a unifying symbol for people of all classes. Through popular literature, art and folklore the hero image evolved beyond the reality of a general winning a victory, to a source for popular patriotic inspiration concerning Britain's power and prestige. Wolfe's hero image was one of the symbols which represented an emerging national consciousness in eighteenth century Britain. Previous chapters have outlined the development of the hero image in popular culture and how that image survived and prospered, despite controversies concerning the 1763 peace treaty and acquisition of Canada. Wolfe's hero image was a myth, created and accepted by a people who found in the dead general an ideal symbol with

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[1]"An Elegy. On the Death of General Wolfe", Annual Register, 1763, p. 240.

which to represent their nation's new role as a military and imperial power.

The hero image reveals the ability of the general public to partake in patriotism and nationalism on a non-political level. Yet Wolfe's image has also had influence beyond popular culture, penetrating into the realm of scholarship. The hero image has been a part of how historians have written on the general's significance in history, either through an acceptance or rejection of the ideals which originated in the eighteenth century. The first part of this discussion will consist of a review of some of the historiography of Wolfe, in the context of the hero image, giving an indication of how myth has influenced scholarship.

Wolfe's hero image is also important in terms of eighteenth century notions on nationalism, as the idea of a subject's sense of belonging to the country. The existence and influence of nationalism in British history has been much debated among historians.[2] The second half of this

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[2]There has been some scholarly debate of late concerning whether Britain has ever succumbed to nationalism at any point in its history. A recent article by Christopher Hill relates the lack of British nationalism at present and in the past. See, "Dusting Down the Revolution", Manchester Guardian Weekly, 5 May 1991, p. 4. Other scholars have attempted to prove the existence of nationalism in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See G. Newman, The Rise of English Nationalism; K. Wilson, "Empire of Virtue: The Imperial Project and Hanoverian Culture, 1720-1785" in A Nation State in War and Peace, Britain 1688-1788, forthcoming; J. Mackenzie, ed., Imperialism and Popular Culture; L. Colley, "Britannia's Children: Images and Identities", unpublished

discussion will focus on the role of the hero image in terms of the emerging nationalism of eighteenth century Britain. Overall the hero myth has influenced the manner in which Wolfe has been represented, both in history and by historians.

The image of Wolfe as the noble, wise and virtuous Christian soldier which was created in the eighteenth century became not only part of popular folklore, but also scholarship. Many works written on Wolfe throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have, whether consciously or not, been written in accordance with the characteristics and romance of the hero myth. Few nineteenth century historians questioned Wolfe's pure and noble character, or the soundness of his strategy against Quebec. One of the best known works extolling the romantic hero image is Francis Parkman's Wolfe and Montcalm. Parkman unashamedly praised Wolfe's intellect and ability as a commander, stating that:

> [T]he controlling principles of his life were duty to his country and his profession, loyalty to the King, and fidelity to his own ideal of the perfect soldier.[3]

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paper, 1990.

[3]Francis Parkman, Wolfe and Montcalm, (Toronto: George N. Morang and Company, 1899), Vol. III, p. 27. For similar romanticized histories of Wolfe, see A.G. Bradley, Wolfe, 1904; B. Willson, The Life and Letters of James Wolfe, 1909; D. Grinnell-Milne, Mad is He? The Character and Achievement of James Wolfe, 1963; R. Reilly, The Rest to Fortune: the Life of Major-General James Wolfe, 1960, and R. Garrett, General Wolfe, 1975.

Wolfe's life and career were presented as a romantic, epic adventure. Parkman viewed the general's victory at Quebec as being of the utmost significance in western European history, concluding that "with the triumph of Wolfe on the Heights of Abraham began the history of the United States."[4]

The acceptance of the hero image has also resulted in the inability to view Wolfe critically in the context of his significance in history. In the same manner as the eighteenth century popular press, some historians have speculated on Wolfe's value to Britain had he survived. Smollett's History of England, employs speculation on Wolfe's fame had he lived:

> Had his faculties been exercised to their full extent by opportunity and action, had his judgement been fully matured by age and experience, he would, without a doubt, have rivalled in reputation the most celebrated captains of antiquity.[5]

The passage expounds heroic praise, but hardly objective history. From the eighteenth to the twentieth century, the accepted historical idea of Wolfe was a combination of fact and fantasy moulded into the hero image.

The closeness with which some historians have related the hero's ideas and motifs reveals how influential myth can

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[4]Parkman, Vol. III, p. 255. See also Grinnell-Milne, pp. 287-88.

[5]Smollett, Vol. II, p. 71.

be in history. In A.G. Bradley's Wolfe, the author refers to the general as unique among professional soldiers of his day by his desire to educated and better himself, all the while being modest and untouched by the corruption of the military establishment.[6] Another aspect of the hero image taken to heart by many historians was that Wolfe did not commit errors of judgement during the seige of Quebec. Edward Salmon's examination of the Quebec campaign lacked a critical and unbiased view of Wolfe:

> [H]is [Wolfe's] brilliant soldiership was manifest almost from the very hour he received his commission; his one mistake at Montmorency would not have cost him if his men had given him the chance of discovering it before it was too late.[7]

A hero of Wolfe's intellect and merit could not have made such poor strategic judgement in choosing a frontal attack on a well fortified line, therefore his soldiers or subordinate commanders were faulted. The idea presented by some historians that Wolfe was somehow infallible correlates to the eighteenth century hero myth, which had removed human failings from the general.

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[6]Bradley, pp. 51-53.

[7]Edward Salmon, General Wolfe, (Toronto: Cassell and Company, 1909), p. 229. Wolfe attempted an assault on the well entrenched French lines at Montmorency Falls, which was down river from Quebec city. The French, who greatly out-numbered the British, refused to come out to fight and from their fortifications were able to drive the British soldiers back and inflict a high number of casualties. Parkman also takes the view that the soldiers failed at Montmorency because of their recklessness and not through the fault of poor strategy. See Vol. III, p. 102.

In writing history, scholars inevitably infuse their own biases and opinions on to a subject. Thus historical events and their significance continue to be debated, Wolfe and the battle of Quebec being no exceptions. The heroic image of Wolfe in scholarship survived virtually unchallenged well into the twentieth century. However, Wolfe's character and military reputation began to be re-examined critically by some historians after the First World War; the main objective being to remove the myth of the Wolfe's image from historical reality.

Among the more critical studies of Wolfe is E.R. Adair's essay, "The Military Reputation of Major-General James Wolfe". Adair criticized historians for clouding reality through endowing Wolfe with unrealistic heroic qualities.[8] By turning the hero image on its head, Adair attempted to dispel the romantic myth of Wolfe. The differing views of historians on Wolfe's character are revealed through interpretations of a letter Wolfe sent to his mother in which he related that it was:

> [A] very great misfortune of this country that I, your son, who have, I know but a very modest capacity, and some degree of diligence a little above the ordinary run, should be thought, as I generally am, one of the best officers of my rank in the service.[9]

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[8]Adair, p. 7.

[9]B. Willson, The Life and Letters of James Wolfe, (London: William Heinemann, 1909), p. 280, Wolfe to his mother 8 November 1755.

Bradley believed Wolfe's comments reflected his natural modesty and desire to do his duty for his country.[10] However, Adair took an opposing view that the letter revealed smugness and "mock modesty" on Wolfe's part.[11] Adair was very critical of Wolfe's reputation as a military genius. He disagreed with scholars who proposed that Wolfe's actions decided the fate of Louisbourg in 1758. According to military records, particularly Amherst's journal, Wolfe, though a capable soldier, was only following orders and not developing strategy.[12] Adair also pointed out that the final plan for the assault on Quebec began as a suggestion of the brigadiers and was not a plan Wolfe had in mind from the beginning of the seige.[13] In Adair's opinion, Wolfe was a good regimental officer, but not a strategist or genius of war.

Thus revisions to the history of Wolfe since the 1930s have attempted to discern folklore from fact. Where Adair's essay was critical in order to provoke debate, C.P. Stacey's

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[10]Bradley, p. 78.

[11]Adair, p. 9.

[12]Ibid., pp. 16-17.

[13]Ibid., p. 26. According to the hero myth, Wolfe was solely responsible for the final plan of attack against Quebec. See A Monody on the Death of General Wolfe, p. 16, Wolfe "used every strategem of war to force the enemy from their entrenchments; which not having the desired effect, he, alone, singly in opinion, formed that noble resolution to land."

more modern works on Wolfe have attempted to remove the romance of the hero image through a thorough examination of documents and letters concerning the seige. Stacey revealed Wolfe's uncertainty about how to proceed against the fortress city through a study of the plans adopted and rejected by the commander.[14] Wolfe's inability to devise a viable plan was his greatest flaw in Stacey's opinion, though he was an able officer in other respects. As Stacey points out:

> [A]s a strategist ... Wolfe was painfully inadequate. ... [T]here is no military figure so ineffective as a general who cannot make up his mind. ... He could win a battle, though he could not plan a campaign.[15]

According to Stacey, the victory was owed more to a well-trained army than to the strategic ability of its commander.

The re-interpretation of Wolfe away from the hero image, however, did not go unchallenged. Duncan Grinnell-Milne's book, Mad is He? The Character and Achievement of James Wolfe, was written in response to Stacey's Quebec 1759: The Seige and Battle. According to Grinnell-Milne, Stacey gave too much credit to the army at the expense of

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[14]Stacey, Quebec 1759: the Seige and Battle, pp. 47, 60-61. See also Eccles, "The Battle of Quebec: A Reappraisal", pp. 126-128.

[15]Stacey, "Generals and Generalship Before Quebec, 1759-1760", Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers (1959) 11-12.

the man who planned and executed the campaign.[16] The book follows the romantic ideal of Wolfe as the hero. Grinnell-Milne discounts the story of Wolfe wrapping his sword on the table and boasting victory over the French while at a dinner with William Pitt and Earl Temple, as being out of character.[17] Yet he relates the elegy myth as plausible, stating that "among senior officers in the assembled boats quiet conversation would still be permissible" and therefore the famed lines could have been recited.[18] Grinnell-Milne's work overall reflects the continued influence of the hero image in history writing.

Another revisionist work on Wolfe by W.J. Eccles, attempted to show how luck rather than military skill was more decisive in the victory and that neither Wolfe nor Montcalm deserved praise for their conduct. According to Eccles, most historiography on Wolfe is biased because of the presumption that the British would be victorious from the start of the campaign.[19] Rather than part of a developed strategy, Wolfe's final plan was a gamble which could have brought victory or disastrous defeat as retreat back down the cliffs would have been almost impossible. The

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[16]Grinnell-Milne, pp. 9-10.

[17]Grinnell-Milne, p. 7. Adair viewed the same incident as in keeping with the character of a man who "had at last arrived and ... knew it.", p. 11.

[18]Grinnell-Milne, p. 210 note.

[19]Eccles, p. 6.

plan was not the mark of a genius commander, but a desperate man running out of time and options.[20] Eccles summed up his argument with biting criticism of both commanders:

> The odd fact that in the 1759 battle both Wolfe and Montcalm received mortal wounds is a sure indication that there was something seriously wrong with the tactics they employed that day. ... It gives one to think that perhaps the most overlooked determining factor in history has been stupidity.[21]

Though Eccles' essay renounces the hero image, his greatest concern relates to how the battle should have been fought rather than placing Wolfe in a historical context. By discarding the ideals of the hero image, some scholars have surmised Wolfe's military reputation was more based on fiction than fact. The hero image has for two centuries played an influential role in how critically historians treat Wolfe and his role at the battle of Quebec.

Emphasizing the human factor as opposed to the ideal hero has become an important part of writings on Wolfe. An interesting, though fictional work by Simon Schama, entitled Dead Certainties: Unwarranted Speculations, juxtaposes the image of Wolfe presented by Benjamin West and Francis Parkman with a revisionist view of the battle's events, through three fictional accounts. Schama's narrative of the events of the battle reveals Wolfe's fears and uncertainties

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[20]Ibid., p. 131. See also Schama, pp. 8-15.

[21]Ibid., p. 133.

about himself and the risks of his plan, without succumbing to the ideals of the hero image. The hero myth, Schama argues, was the result of the popularity and influence of West's patriotic and allegorical, though historically inaccurate, painting; and Parkman's history which "made the death of Wolfe a great transfiguration."[22] However influential West and Parkman were in expounding the ideals of the hero image, Schama is in error by believing that they created it. The view of Wolfe as the untarnished hero who sacrificed his life to bring Britain a great victory was a product of the eighteenth century, as shown through popular literature and art of the period. West's painting was a visual compilation of the accepted ideals of the hero image which had been part of popular culture since 1759. It was the image created by writers, orators, and artists of the eighteenth century that became the accepted view of Wolfe and not just the works of two men.

Though the hero image has influenced the writing of Wolfe's history, it was originally employed as a means of glorifying the country during and after the Seven Years War. In the mid-eighteenth century the people were becoming more aware of Britain's new status as a military and imperial power. As the man who sacrificed his life for the glory of Britain, Wolfe was easily moulded into a symbol of British

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[22]Simon Schama, Dead Certainties: Unwarranted Speculations, (Toronto: Random House Ltd., 1991), pp. 37, 45.

strength and honour, as well as representing the importance of duty to the nation. The hero image therefore is a significant element to understanding the development of British nationalism in the eighteenth century. Popular views on patriotism and nationalism are revealed through the hero myth, as well as the significance to the public of Britain's military power and imperial possessions.[23] Praise of Wolfe was one means by which all classes could celebrate the status and prestige of Britain over other European nations, particularly France.

Wolfe's hero image was a very patriotic aspect of the emerging national consciousness in eighteenth century Britain. Though most historians agree that patriotism, being the love or devotion to one's country, existed in the history of all nations, the idea of nationalism has been a more problematic concept. The definition employed for the purposes of this discussion will follow that of Newman, in which nationalism, though encompassing the characteristics of patriotism, also relates to the self-awareness of a people or group of the country's status, along with the belief in the subject's sense of participation in or belonging to the nation.[24] Wolfe's hero image extolled and exploited patriotic spirit whether through poetry or penny-

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[23]See Kathleen Wilson, "Empire of Virtue" and John Mackenzie, Imperialism and Popular Culture.

[24]Newman, pp. 51-53.

prints. Yet the importance in terms of nationalism is that the people glorified and praised Wolfe in a fashion which celebrated Britain and themselves, as seen in the poem which opened this chapter. The hero image emphasized duty and individual sacrifice, and therefore brought to the fore the idea of a subject's potential service to the country.

The role of the hero image is one piece in the puzzle of understanding the development of nationalism in the eighteenth century. In The Rise of English Nationalism, Newman proposed that the development of nationalism in Britain was a reaction by the people against French cultural influence among the elites. The British aristocracy's fascination with French ideas, art and manners eventually resulted in a revulsion against anything French in popular culture. During the mid-eighteenth century popular ideas on the glory of the British past, ancient constitution, and Saxon heritage gained prominence.[25]

In such an atmosphere, Wolfe's hero image conformed perfectly with popular anti-French sentiment. His victory at Quebec replaced the sense of humiliation and embarrassment, which had clouded the early years of the war

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[25]Newman, pp. 72-78, 118. Wilson also discusses the rise of Francophobia in eighteenth century Britain, see "Empire of Virtue", pp. 27-30. Though the English aristocracy were enamoured of French culture, according to Horace Walpole, the French were just as fascinated with English customs and manners: "[O]ur passion for everything French, is nothing to theirs for everything English." To H. Mann, 30 November 1762, Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Sir Horace Mann, Lewis, ed., Vol. VI, p. 105.

with France, with pride and prestige over Britain's conquests. A larger French army had been defeated and an empire won for Britain in North America by a man of merit according to the hero image, not of rank, and therefore untainted by the French influence which had corrupted the elite. Wolfe's hero image represented Britain as a strong, powerful nation and was promoted to counter fear of complacency and impotence associated with earlier defeats against the French.[26] Hero-worship of men who were daring and courageous reflected on the status and prestige of the people and nation. Therefore, altering the reality of Wolfe's character, appearance and career were of minimal concern when compared with the glorification of Britain through celebration of the hero. Poetry, paintings, statues and songs of Wolfe encompassed an heroic ideal which promoted British supremacy in Europe and overseas, freed from the cultural chains of France.

Wolfe's hero image reveals one element of the growing sense of nationalism and imperial consciousness among the British people of the eighteenth century. However Newman's argument that British nationalism was a reaction against French influence among the aristocracy does not encompass the positive aspects of the hero image and nationalism. Wolfe's hero image was not solely an anti-French symbol. Though celebration of Wolfe was based on a British conquest

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[26]Wilson, "Empire of Virtue", pp. 31-33, 42.

over France in North America, the hero image evolved beyond simple reaction against France to a pro-British ideal of honour and prestige. The individual's place and duty within the nation were defined through Wolfe's sacrifice. As a strong trading and colonial power, Britain needed men like Wolfe to build an empire, even though imperial expansion relied upon continual and expensive wars.[27] The hero image within the development of nationalism was part of how people identified themselves and their country, which is a key element of nationalism.[28] Wolfe represented the strength and prestige of Britain as a symbol in which the people of the eighteenth century saw their nation's importance and vitality as a military and imperial power.

The hero image served as a unifying symbol in the development of British nationalism in the eighteenth century. The reality of the man and battle were not of importance to people of the eighteenth century because the significance of the hero image lies in the ability of myth to influence both popular culture and history. The purpose of this study has not been to dispel the hero image but to identify it. Wolfe will most likely remain clouded in myth, and the reality of the man and events of his last campaign may be beyond the reach of historians. However the significance of myth in history must be dealt with in order

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[27]Ibid., pp. 39-43

[28]Newman, p. 132.

to understand how such a hero image influenced the people of the eighteenth century as well as those who write history.

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